JIDAIGEKI COMIC SERIES
時代劇口画
JIDAIGEKI COMIC SERIES

YAGYUURENYA BUGEICHO

柳生連也武芸帖

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時代劇シリーズ
HISTORY OF JAPAN
COMIC
SPECIAL SELECTION

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YAGYU RENYA, LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

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SHINZOU TOMI

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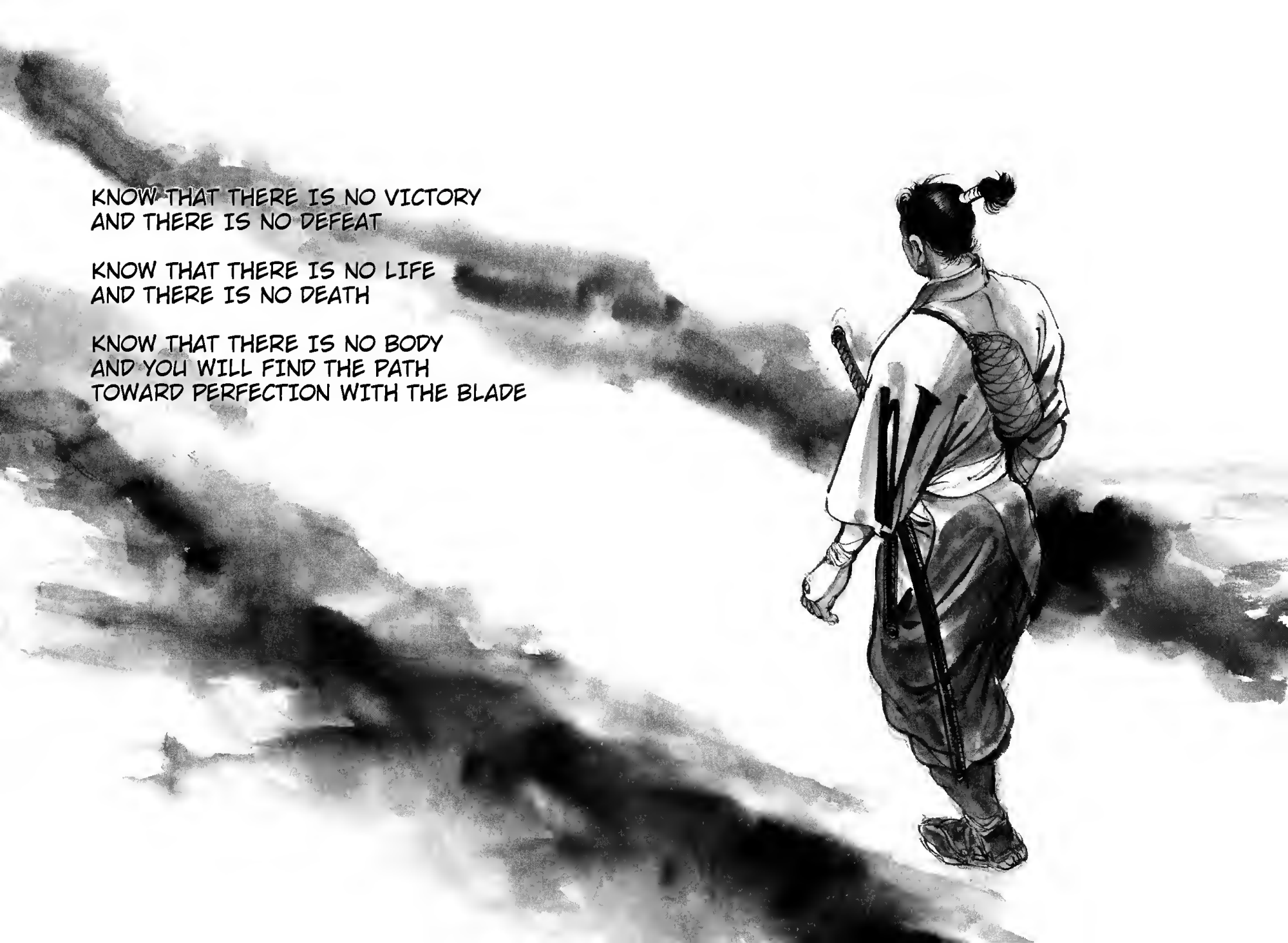
KNOW THAT THERE IS NO VICTORY
AND THERE IS NO DEFEAT
KNOW THAT THERE IS NO LIFE
AND THERE IS NO DEATH
KNOW THAT THERE IS NO BODY
AND YOU WILL FIND THE PATH
TOWARD PERFECTION WITH THE BLADE

KNOW THAT THERE IS NO VICTORY
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YAGYU RENYA
LEGEND OF THE SWORD MASTER

CHAPTER 28: COMBAT WITH BLADES IS THE GATEWAY TO DEATH PAGE 7

CHAPTER 29: DETERMINATION WITH A PURE MIND PAGE 37

CHAPTER 30: CLASH PAGE 69

CHAPTER 31: ILLUSIONARY DEFEAT PAGE 101

CHAPTER 32: ENCOUNTER WITH JUBEI PAGE 131

CHAPTER 33: LONGING PAGE 163

FINAL CHAPTER: THE ENDLESS ROAD PAGE 193

PUBLISHED IN COMIC RAN

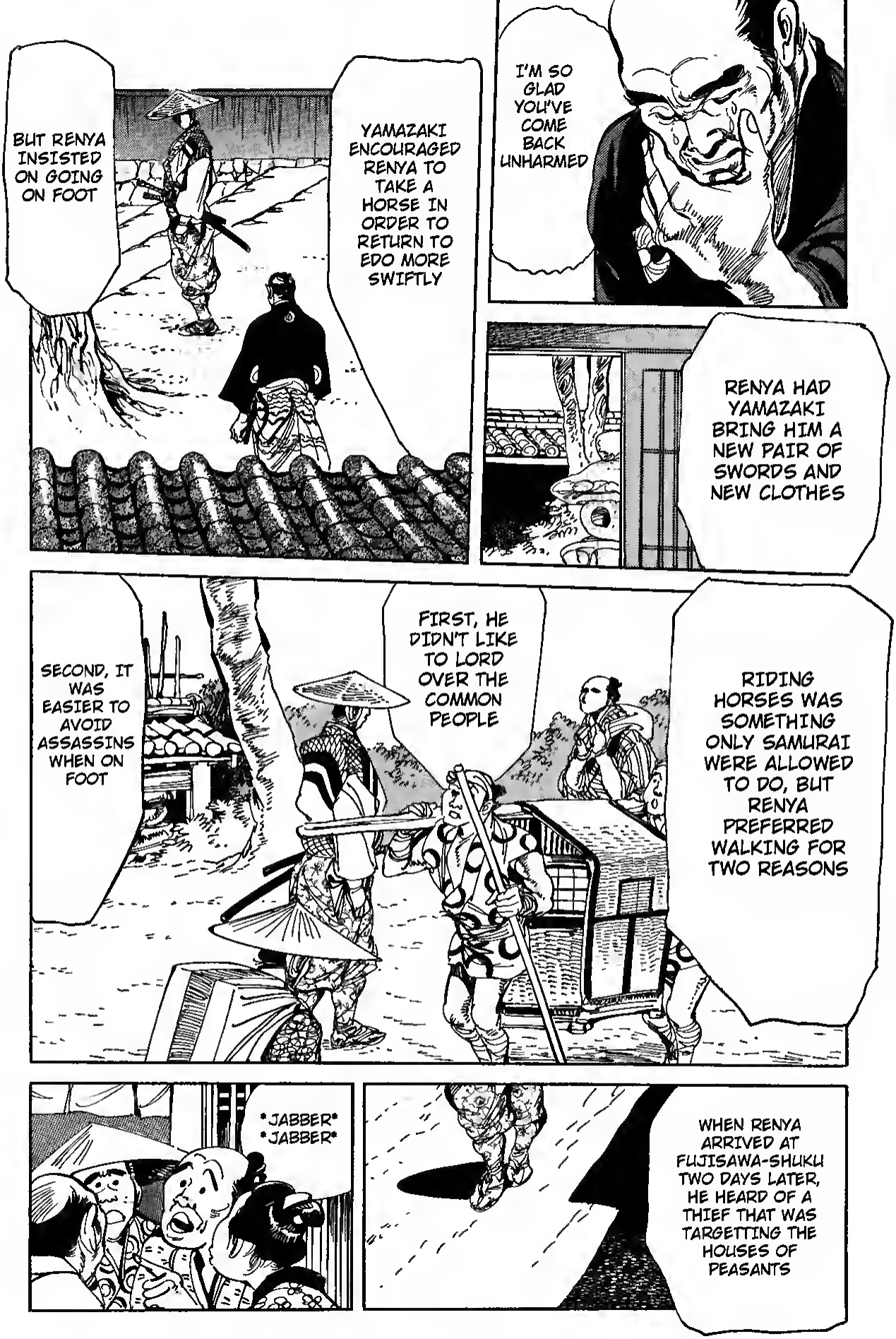
[第二十八話]

刃物勝負は死地の境（なか）

CHAPTER 28: COMBAT WITH BLADES IS THE GATEWAY TO DEATH

HE WRECKED OUR PLAN ENTIRELY!
CURSE THAT TOSHIKANE*!
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME REN'ASAI YAGYU
WE ARE OUT OF OPTIONS!
WE HAVE TO FACE HIM OURSELVES!
BEYOND HAKONE SAT THE CASTLE TOWN OF ODAWARA
LIVING THERE WAS THE ODAWARA CLAN'S TOP PUPIL OF THE SHINKAGE STYLE, A MAN CALLED YAMAZAKI

OH! MASTER TOSHIKANE!
YOUR CLOTHES ARE COVERED WITH BLOOD
WHO WAS TRYING TO KILL YOU, MASTER?
I RAN INTO SOME BANDITS IN HAKONE
BUT ALL THAT BLOOD ON YOUR CLOTHES SUGGESTS ...
YOU FOUGHT A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE
IT IS LIKELY BECAUSE I HAVE TRAINED TO BE READY TO FACE DEATH AT ANY MOMENT...
THAT I AM STILL ALIVE NOW


I'M SO GLAD YOU'VE COME BACK UNHARMED
YAMAZAKI ENCOURAGED RENYA TO TAKE A HORSE IN ORDER TO RETURN TO EDO MORE SWIFTLY
BUT RENYA INSISTED ON GOING ON FOOT
RENYA HAD YAMAZAKI BRING HIM A NEW PAIR OF SWORDS AND NEW CLOTHES
RIDING HORSES WAS SOMETHING ONLY SAMURAI WERE ALLOWED TO DO, BUT RENYA PREFERRED WALKING FOR TWO REASONS
FIRST, HE DIDN'T LIKE TO LORD OVER THE COMMON PEOPLE
SECOND, IT WAS EASIER TO AVOID ASSASSINS WHEN ON FOOT
JABBER *JABBER*
WHEN RENYA ARRIVED AT FUJISAWA-SHUKU TWO DAYS LATER, HE HEARD OF A THIEF THAT WAS TARGETTING THE HOUSES OF PEASANTS

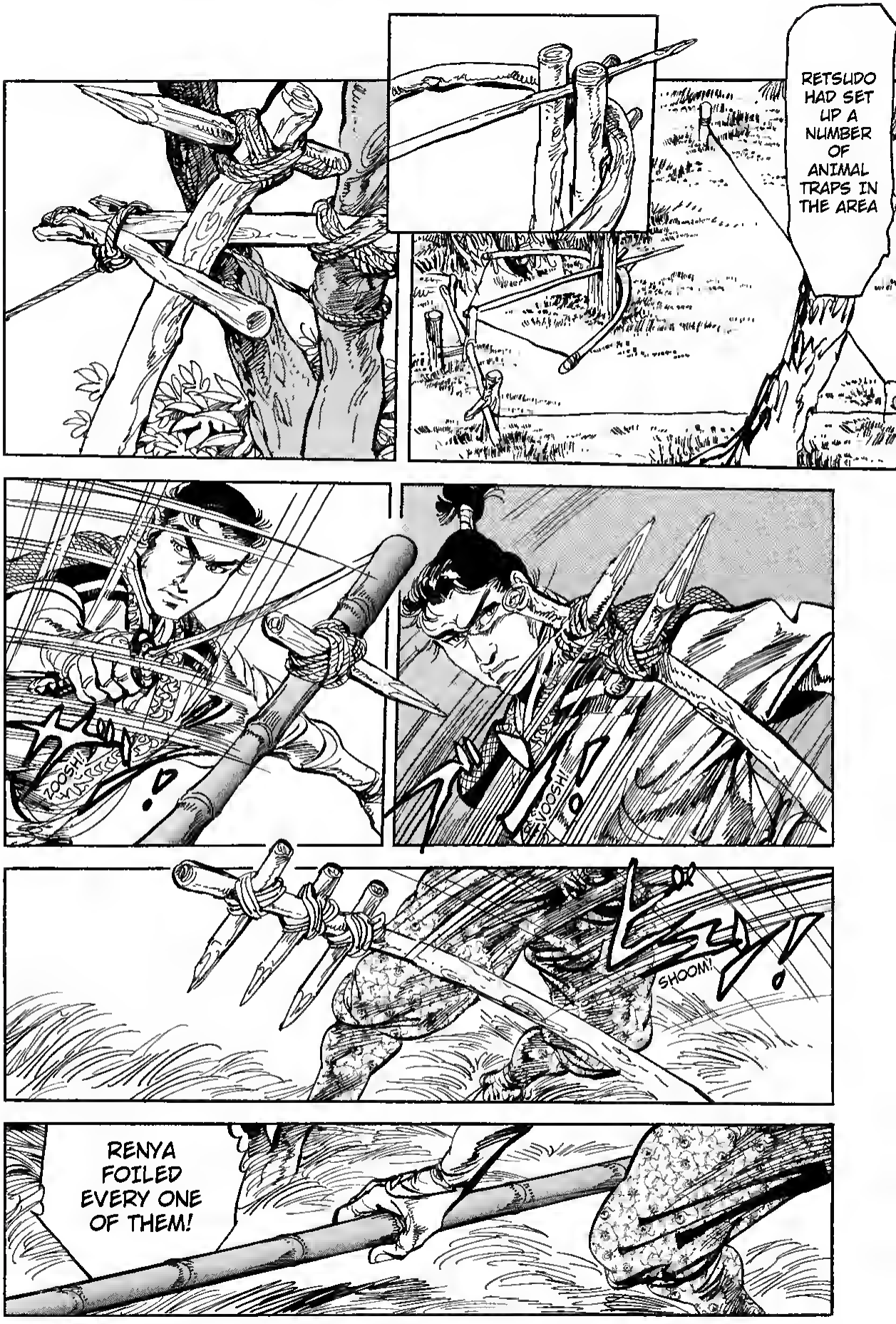
THE NEXT DAY, ON THE ROAD TO HODOGAYA ...
EVEN THE CHILDREN WERE LEFT MANGLED
HE CAME ACROSS A GROUP OF ALMOST FIFTY FARMERS FORMING A WALL
A REVOLT?

HEY, YOU MON-STER!
TIME TO DIE!
HRYAAAAH!
THERE WILL BE TWO MORE FOR EACH OF US ONCE YOU'RE DEAD!
SEE THIS? IT'S A GOLD COIN!
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!
THUD

YOU VILLAIN!
YOU ATTACKED PEASANTS IN FUJISAWA AND DIDN'T EVEN SPARE THEIR CHILDREN!
DIE!
STOP THIS!
SHUCK!
ACK!
WHUMP!

EVERYONE, AFTER HIM!
ROOOAAR!
YOU KILLED HIM! YOU MONSTER!
CHASE HIM DOWN!
I'LL GIVE ONE HUNDRED GOLD COINS TO THE FIRST PERSON TO HURT HIM!
THAT'S RIGHT! KILL HIM!

WE'LL FORCE HIM TO THE COAST AND THEN MAKE GOOD SPORT OF HIM!
IT WAS ALL A TRAP SET BY RETSUDO YAGYU
AND THAT MEANT ...
THERE WOULD BE MORE TRAPS ALONG THE PATH AHEAD!
SHIFF!
FWOOSH!


RETSUDO HAD SET UP A NUMBER OF ANIMAL TRAPS IN THE AREA
ZOOSH!
SHOOM!
RENYA FOILED EVERY ONE OF THEM!

CALTROPS HAD BEEN SCATTERED IN THAT VERY SPOT!
RENYA USED A LENGTH OF BAMBOO TO VAULT OVER A PATCH OF GRASS!
JUST AS RENYA LAND-ED ...
WHOOSH!
HE WAS GREETED BY AN ARROW!

ARROW AFTER ARROW CAME AT RENYA FROM BOTH SIDES!
TWANG!
AND ANOTHER FROM THE LEFT!
RENYA WAS SKILLED ENOUGH TO CUT AN ARROW MID-FLIGHT
HE DIVES IN A DESPERATE ATTEPMT TO AVOID THE PROJECTILES!
HE WASN'T CAPABLE OF WATCHING BOTH ARCHERS AS THEY FIRED AT THE SAME TIME
BUT HE HAD TO BE ABLE TO SEE THE ARROW AS IT WAS RELEASED IN ORDER TO DO SO

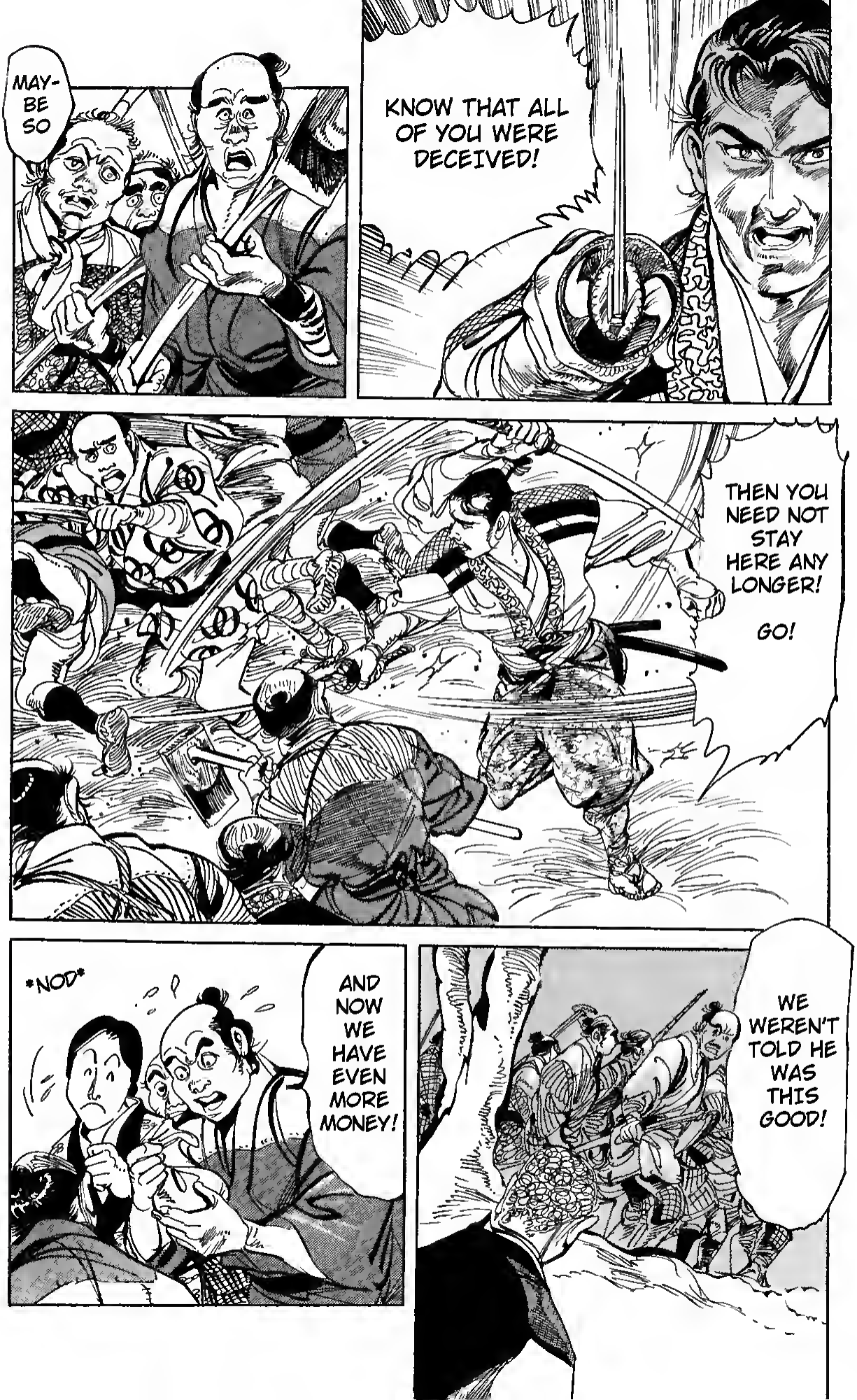
KNOWING HE HAD TO TAKE THE BOWMEN DOWN ONE AT A TIME, RENYA SOUGHT COVER
WHOOF!
HE THREW HIS SHORT SWORD, USING THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S "CROSS STRIKE TECHNIQUE" ...
SHINK
AND STRUCK HOME!
RENYA QUICKLY AVOIDS AN ARROW COMING FROM THE OTHER ARCHER!

TWANG
TWING!
TWANG!
THE NINJA FIRES A LAST, FRANTIC BARRAGE OF ARROWS!
ONE ARROW! TWO ARROWS! THREE! FOUR!
RENYA RUSHES HIS ENEMY!

HE'S SURELY SOME SORT OF DEMON!
INCREDIBLE!
HE'S...!

RENYA'S BLADE CUTS THROUGH THE SIXTH ARROW ...
AND THE NINJA'S BOW AT THE SAME TIME!
WHERE IS THE REST OF THE MONEY YOU WERE GOING TO GIVE THE PEASANTS?!
SHINK!
WHAM!
RENYA'S GAZE IS DRAWN TO A PACK!
JANGLE!

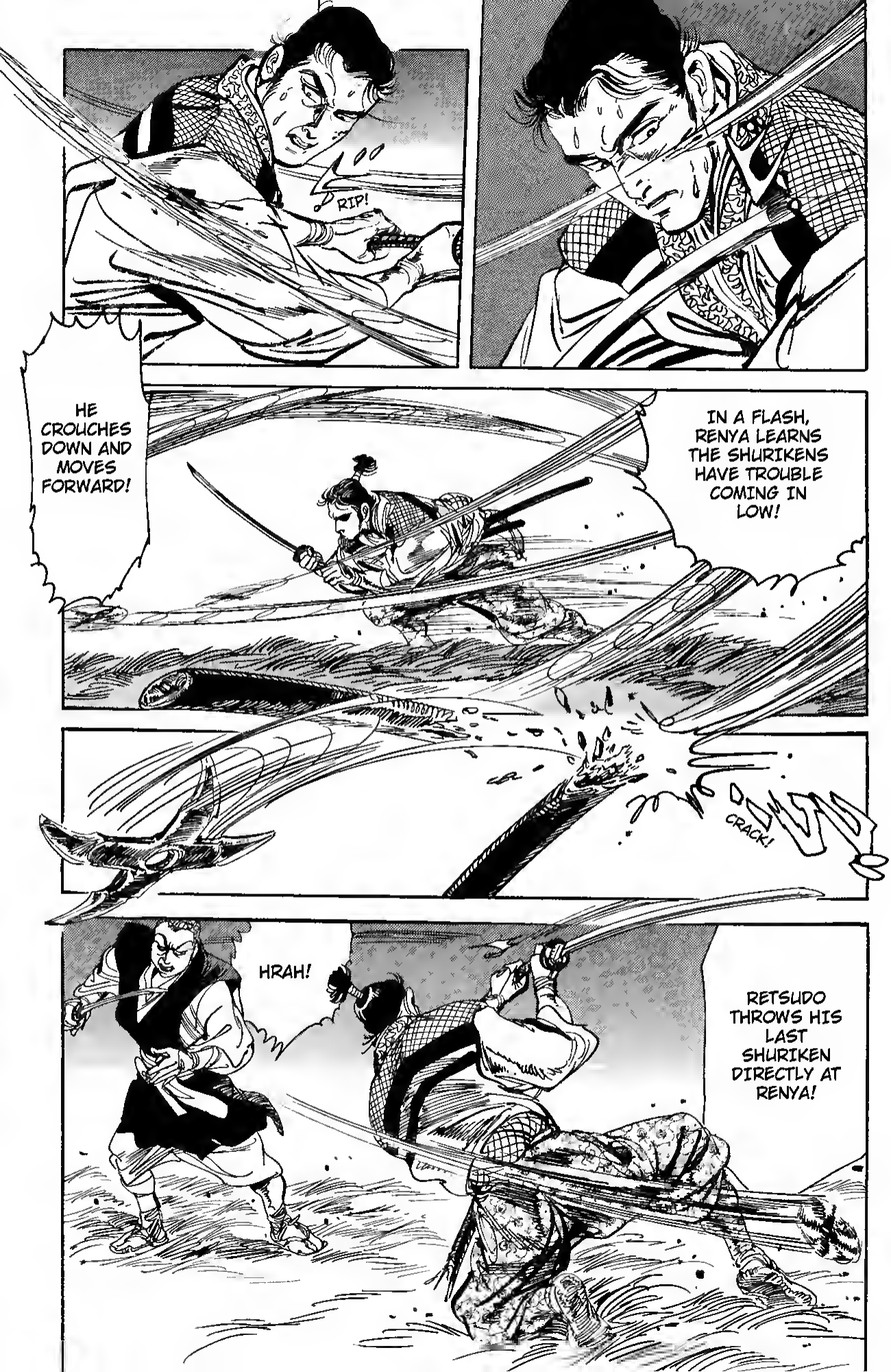
I AM NO THIEF!
I AM A SEEKER OF TRUTH WHO FOLLOWS THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR
I FLED BECAUSE I WISH TO DO YOU NO HARM!
I DID NOT FLEE FROM FEAR!
IT'S GOLD!
JANGLE!
IF MONEY IS WHAT YOU WANT, THEN TAKE THIS!


MAY-BE SO
KNOW THAT ALL OF YOU WERE DECEIVED!
THEN YOU NEED NOT STAY HERE ANY LONGER!
GO!
NOD
AND NOW WE HAVE EVEN MORE MONEY!
WE WEREN'T TOLD HE WAS THIS GOOD!

JABBER
ガヤガヤ
WRETCHED YOKELS!
RETSU-DO!
I DIDN'T THINK THE SON OF A FEUDAL LORD WOULD HAVE TO DIRTY HIS OWN HANDS TAKING CARE OF A COUNTRY SAMURAI LIKE YOU
BUT IT SEEMS I HAVE NO CHOICE
NOW YOU WILL FACE JUSTICE!
YOU TOOK THE LIVES OF INNO-CENTS IN FUJI-SAWA!

MY SKILLS WILL BE THE LAST THING YOU SEE!
JING!
SHOOOO
SHURIKENS CAME FLYING FROM UNEXPECTED DIRECTIONS!
SHIFF!
SHOOF!
ZIFF!
WHISH!
THEY CAME WHIRLING IN RIGHT TOWARD RENYA'S EYES!

THE ARMS OF EACH SHURIKEN WERE SLIGHTLY CURVED
SHIFF!
SHIFF!
PING!
IF RENYA SHOWED A GAP IN HIS DEFENSES, RETSUDO WOULD THROW A SHURIKEN STRAIGHT AT HIM!
HE KNEW THAT IF ONE OF THEM STRUCK HIM, HIS LIFE WOULD BE AT AN END!
ALL RENYA COULD DO WAS LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE SOUND OF THE SHURIKENS WHISTLING THROUGH THE AIR AND TIME HIS DODGES PERFECTLY!


RIP!
HE CROUCHES DOWN AND MOVES FORWARD!
IN A FLASH, RENYA LEARNS THE SHURIKENS HAVE TROUBLE COMING IN LOW!
CRACK!
HRAH!
RETSUDO THROWS HIS LAST SHURIKEN DIRECTLY AT RENYA!

VOOF!-
ONCE RETSUDO HAD THROWN HIS SHORT SWORD ...
PANG!
RENYA HAD RETSUDO WITHIN SWORD RANGE!
ZOOF!
RENYA HAD MADE IT THROUGH RETSUDO'S KILL ZONE!
DON'T JUST STAND THERE!
ATTACK!
BUT LORD RETSU-DO ...
WAH!

NRAAAG!
WE HAVE BEEN DEFEATED, MY LORD
WE ...
JUST SLICE IT RIGHT OFF!
TAKE MY HEAD!
YOU WIN! I LOSE!
FINE!
ガチ!
SHRIRING!
PRE-PARE YOUR-SELF!
I AM GLAD TO RID THE WORLD OF A SNAKE SUCH AS YOU!

SHRING!
1
4
3
2
CHOKE
5
STEPS 1-5 OCCUR IN A BLINK

YOU DO NOT HAVE A MONOPOLY ON HIDDEN WEAPONS
SO MUCH BLOOD!
WHUMP
YOU HAVE DONE NO GOOD IN YOUR LIFE
I-I'M DOOMED TO HELL?!
WH-WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I DIE?!
IT WENT IN AT AN ANGLE, SO IT DIDN'T PIERCE ANY ORGANS, BUT DEATH WILL STILL COME FOR YOU SOON

HELP ME!
NNNAUGH! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
...
YOU WERE ONCE A PRIEST
I'M SURE YOU'VE READ THE SUTRAS
I'M SORRY! JUST DON'T KILL ME!
WE'RE FAMILY, RIGHT?!
YOU'VE TRIED TO KILL ME SO MANY TIMES AND YET YOU STILL THINK I WOULD LET YOU LIVE?
I'LL GIVE YOU ALL OF IT!
I HAVE MONEY!
MY BROTHER MUNEFUYU ORDERED ME TO DO IT!
YOU ONLY WISH TO SAVE YOUR OWN SKIN!
YOU FORCE ME TO TAKE SO MANY LIVES, AND CLAIM NO RESPONS-IBILITY!

FORGIVE ME, PLEASE!
I SWEAR IT'S TRUE!
WHAM!
TING!
TAKE YOUR OWN LIFE
THERE! IS THIS ENOUGH?!

I STILL WANT TO LIVE!
PLEASE, HAVE MERCY!
I'M YOUNG!
KILLING YOU WOULD ONLY SULLY MY BLADE
PANT
PANT
PANT

TAKE ME TO A DOCTOR!
AUGH!
HURRY!
LORD RETSUDO ...
A WARRIOR MUST ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO FACE HIS OWN DEATH
ONE WHO INTENDS TO LEAD US MUST BE A TRUE SAMURAI
SHLUNK!

UNDER-STOOD!
SABURO, FROM THIS DAY FORTH, YOU SHALL TAKE RETSUDO'S NAME!
WANTED TO TAKE A LIFE
RENYA NEVER ONCE ...
BUT TIME AND AGAIN SINCE HE LEFT OWARI, HE WAS PLACED IN SITUATIONS WHERE HE HAD NO OPTION BUT TO SNUFF OUT THE FLAME OF LIFE IN AN INDIVIDUAL
A FIERCE HATRED GREW IN HIM TOWARDS MUNEFUYU, THE MASTERMIND OF THE EDO YAGYUS

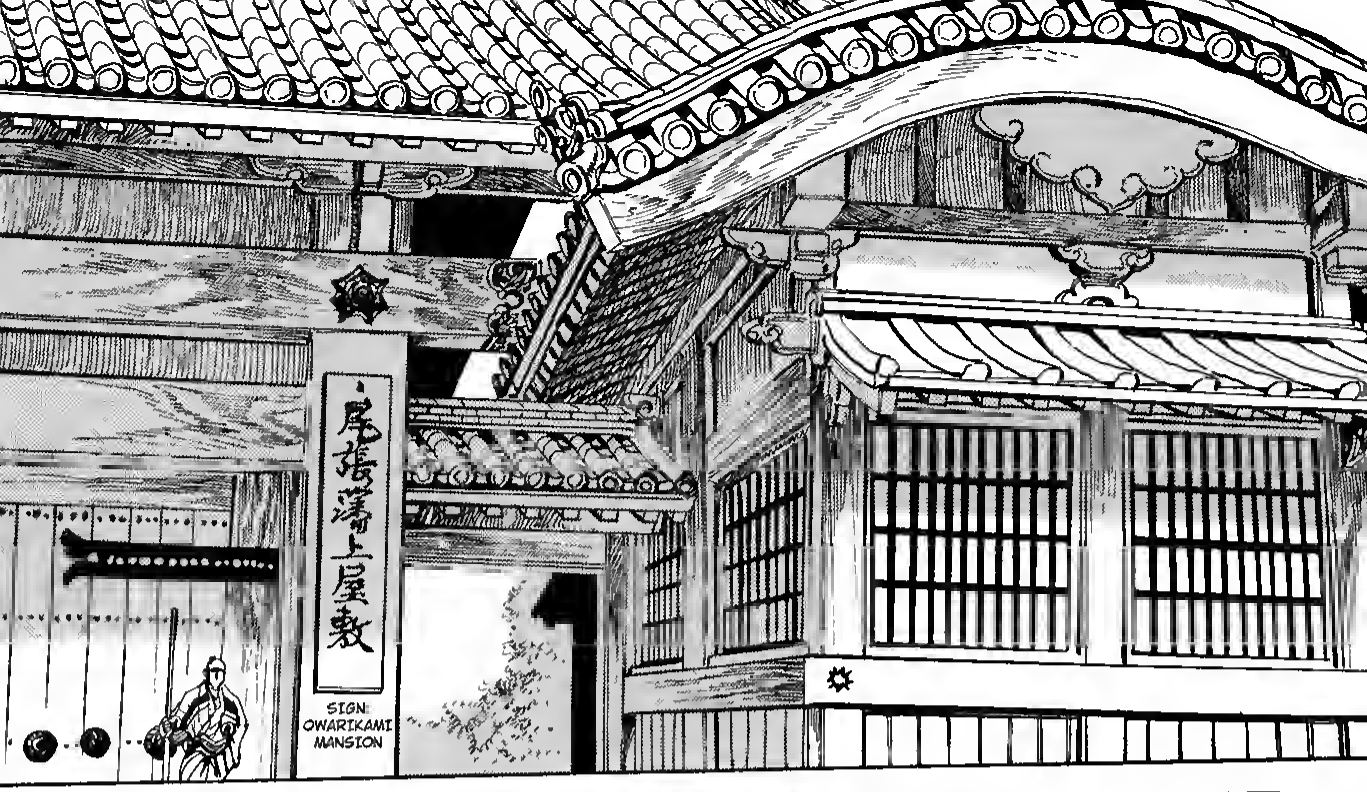
●CHAPTER 28 - FIN●

CHAPTER 29: DETERMINATION WITH A PURE MIND

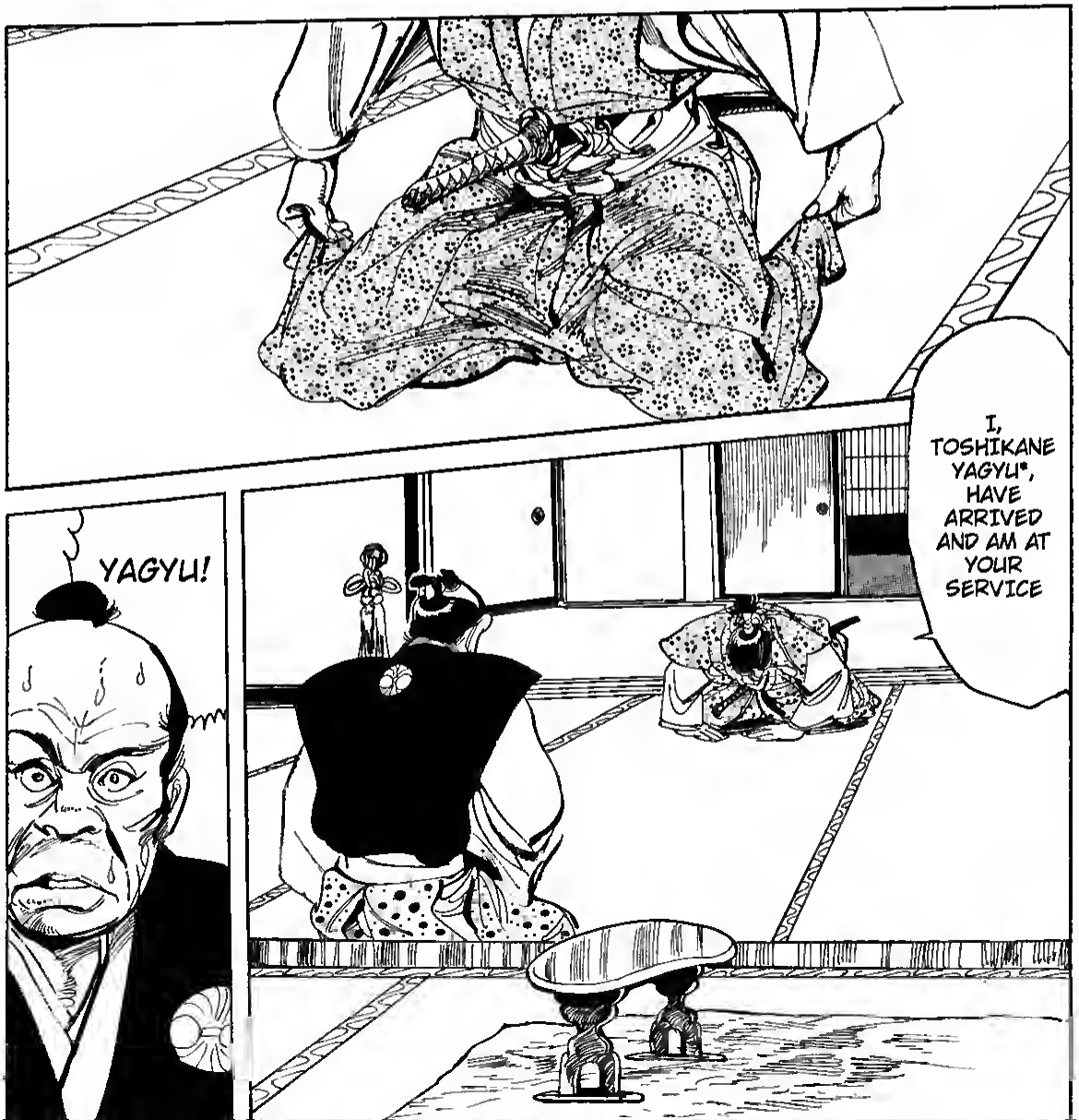
「第二十九話」
心気清爽にて決すべし

THOUGH RENYA PREFERRED NOT TO LOOK DOWN ON THE MASSES FROM HORSEBACK...
HE NEEDED TO TRAVEL QUICKLY
YOUNG MASTER!
NEAR SHINA-GAWA
!

WHAT'S BECOME OF RETSUDO?
THERE WERE MANY UNEX-PECTED ATTEMPTS ON MY LIFE
I WAS WONDERING WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG TO ARRIVE HERE IN EDO
GENPACHI
WELL, IT HASN'T FULLY HEALED JUST YET
AND I'M GLAD YOUR LEG HAS RECOVERED
HE BROUGHT HIS END UPON HIMSELF IN ODAWARA
I'M GLAD YOU'RE BACK SAFELY
LET US MAKE HASTE!
THE LORD IS FURIOUS AT YOUR LATE ARRIVAL, YOUNG MASTER!

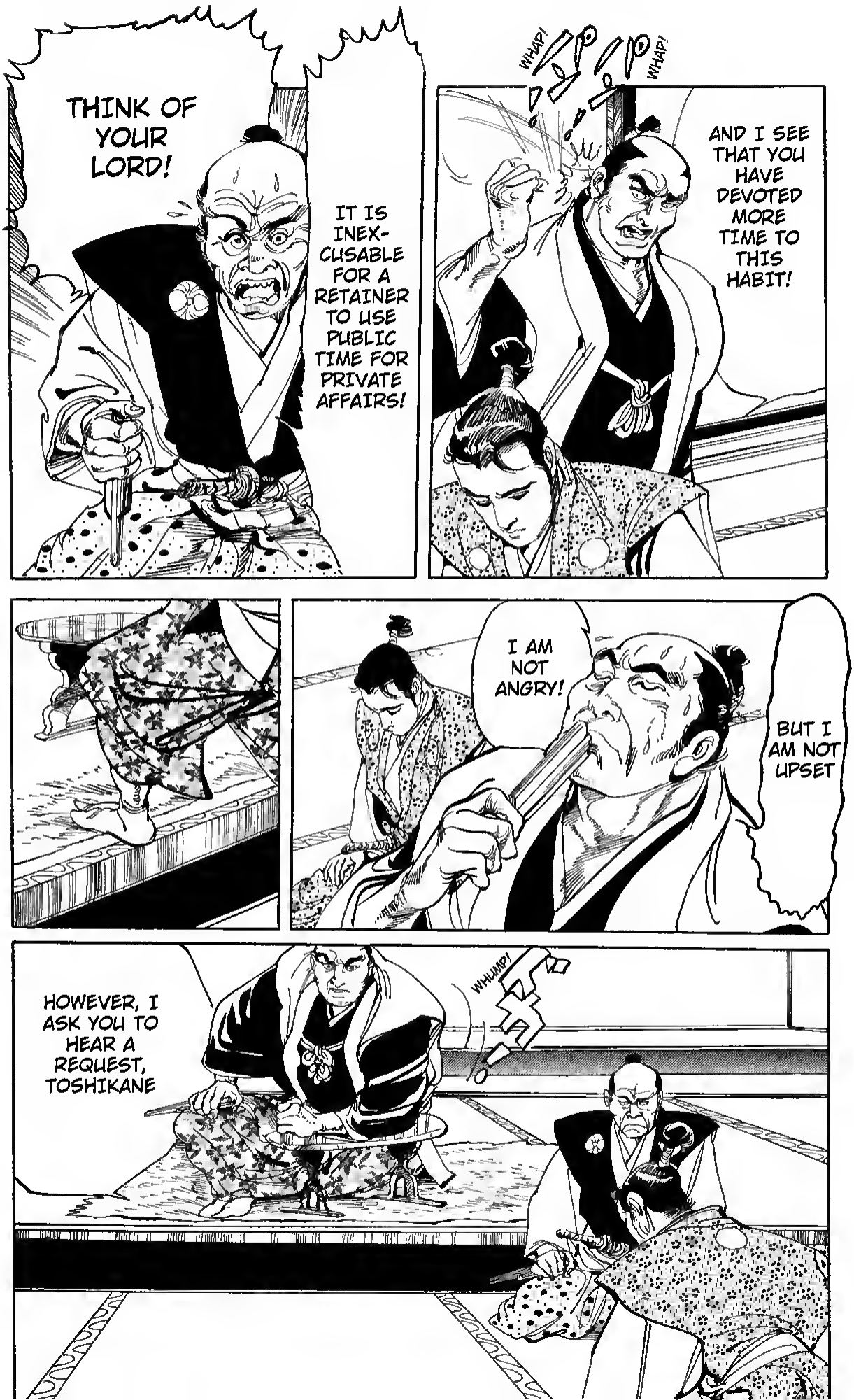


SIGN: OWARIKAMI MANSION

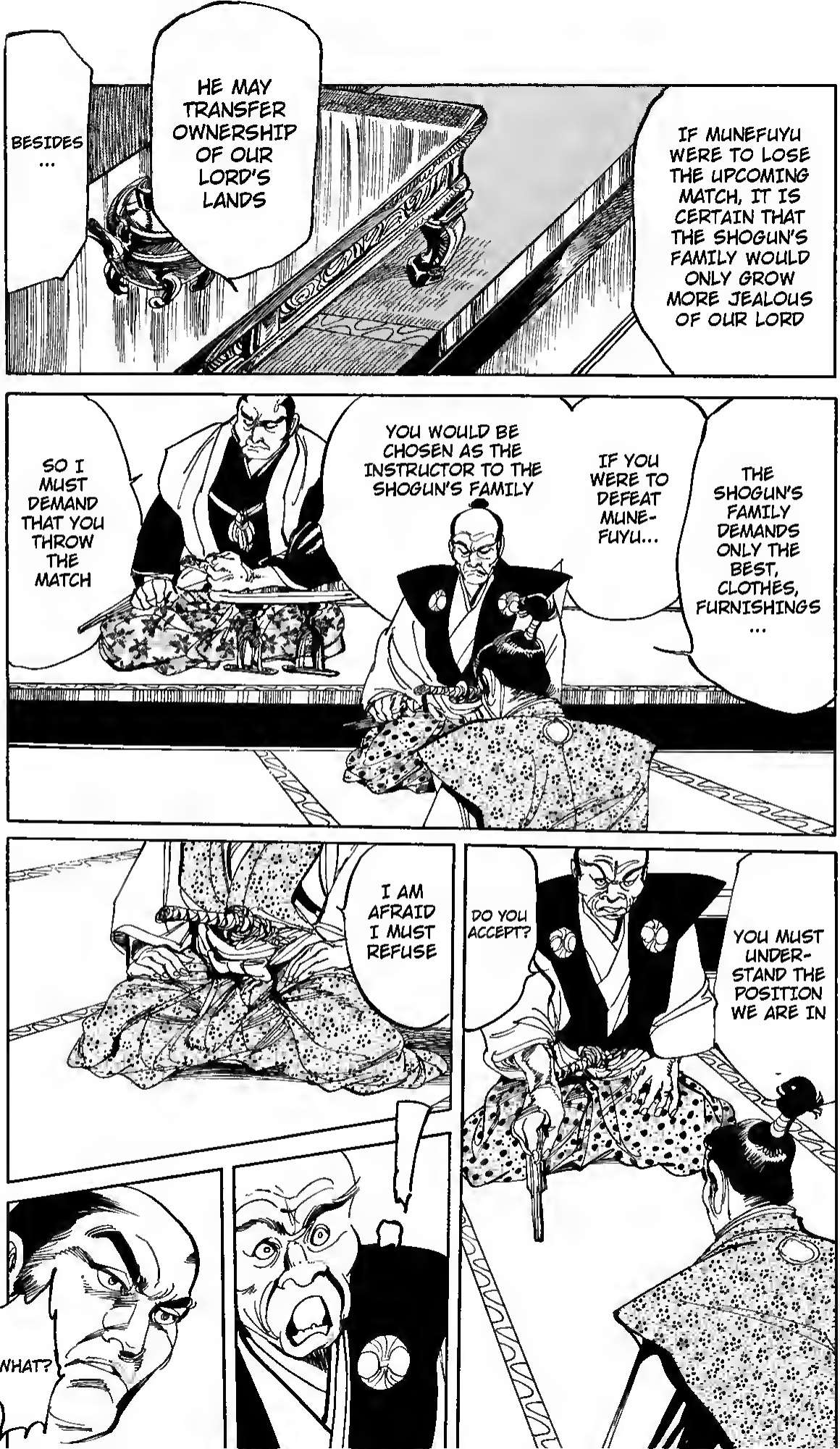


*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD LATER BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

AND NOW THE ONLY EVENT REMAINING IS THE MAIN: A MATCH BETWEEN YOURSELF AND LORD MUNEFUYU YAGYU OF HIDA!
YOU KNOW THAT THE SHOGUN AND HIS FAMILY HAVE A GREAT INTEREST IN THE MARTIAL ARTS
A TOURNAMENT WHERE THE NATION'S FINEST MARTIAL ARTISTS CAN EXHIBIT THEIR SKILLS WILL BE HELD FOR THE SHOGUNATE FAMILY BETWEEN MARCH 18 AND MARCH 25
STOP SHOUTING, SHIMA-NO-KAMI
MY LORD!
HOW COULD YOU DELAY WITH SUCH AN IMPORTANT MATCH IN FRONT OF YOU!
YOU HAD THE NERVE TO RISK A LIFE THAT ISN'T YOURS!
LAST YEAR, YOU ABANDONED YOUR PUBLIC DUTIES WITHOUT PERMISSION IN ORDER TO SAVE SOME BESEIGED PEASANTS!


THINK OF YOUR LORD!
IT IS INEX-CUSABLE FOR A RETAINER TO USE PUBLIC TIME FOR PRIVATE AFFAIRS!
WHAP!
WHAP!
AND I SEE THAT YOU HAVE DEVOTED MORE TIME TO THIS HABIT!
I AM NOT ANGRY!
BUT I AM NOT UPSET
HOWEVER, I ASK YOU TO HEAR A REQUEST, TOSHIKANE
WHUMP!

I WANT YOU TO LOSE
YOUR MATCH WITH MUNEFUYU IS IN THREE DAYS
THESE WORDS MUST NOT LEAVE THIS ROOM
THE TRUTH IS ...
YOU ASK ME TO LOSE ON PURPOSE?
THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY IS GROWING EVER MORE JEALOUS AT MY LORD'S POPULARITY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT
THE GREAT WEALTH PRODUCED BY OWARI IS MORE THAN HE DESERVES
HE IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE SON OF A DAUGHTER OF IEYASU
ALTHOUGH MANY FEUDAL LORDS HOPE THAT MITSUTOMO OF OWARI IS SELECTED AS THE NEXT SHOGUN...

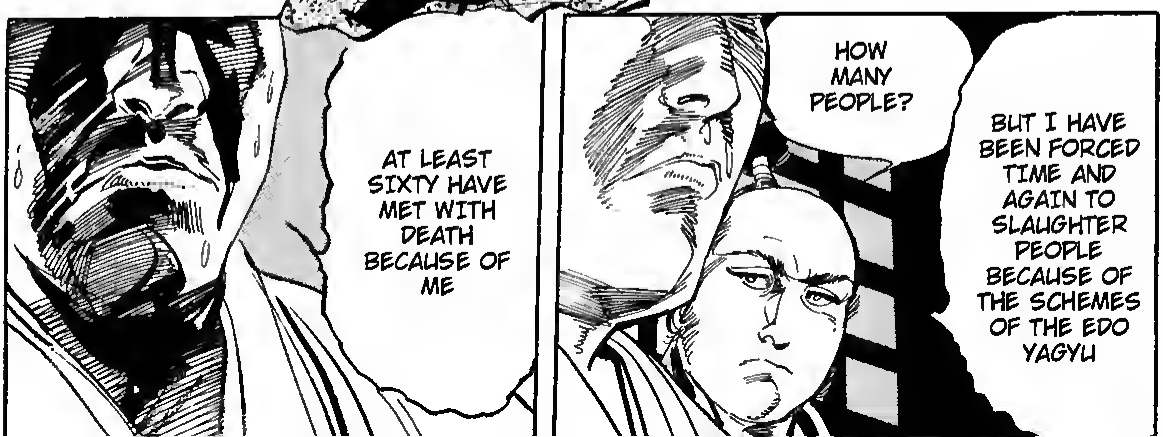

BESIDES ...
HE MAY TRANSFER OWNERSHIP OF OUR LORD'S LANDS
IF MUNEFUYU WERE TO LOSE THE UPCOMING MATCH, IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY WOULD ONLY GROW MORE JEALOUS OF OUR LORD
SO I MUST DEMAND THAT YOU THROW THE MATCH
YOU WOULD BE CHOSEN AS THE INSTRUCTOR TO THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY
IF YOU WERE TO DEFEAT MUNE-FUYU...
THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY DEMANDS ONLY THE BEST, CLOTHES, FURNISHINGS ...
I AM AFRAID I MUST REFUSE
DO YOU ACCEPT?
YOU MUST UNDER-STAND THE POSITION WE ARE IN
WHAT?

I CANNOT
I WILL NOT TAKE UP THE SWORD FOR POLITICAL REASONS
NOR WILL I SET IT ASIDE
Y-YOU REFUSE A REQUEST FROM YOUR LORD?!
YOU DO NOT CARE WHAT BECOMES OF THE WEALTH OF OWARI?!
NNRRG!
SO ...
SO YOU SAY ...
CRUNCH!

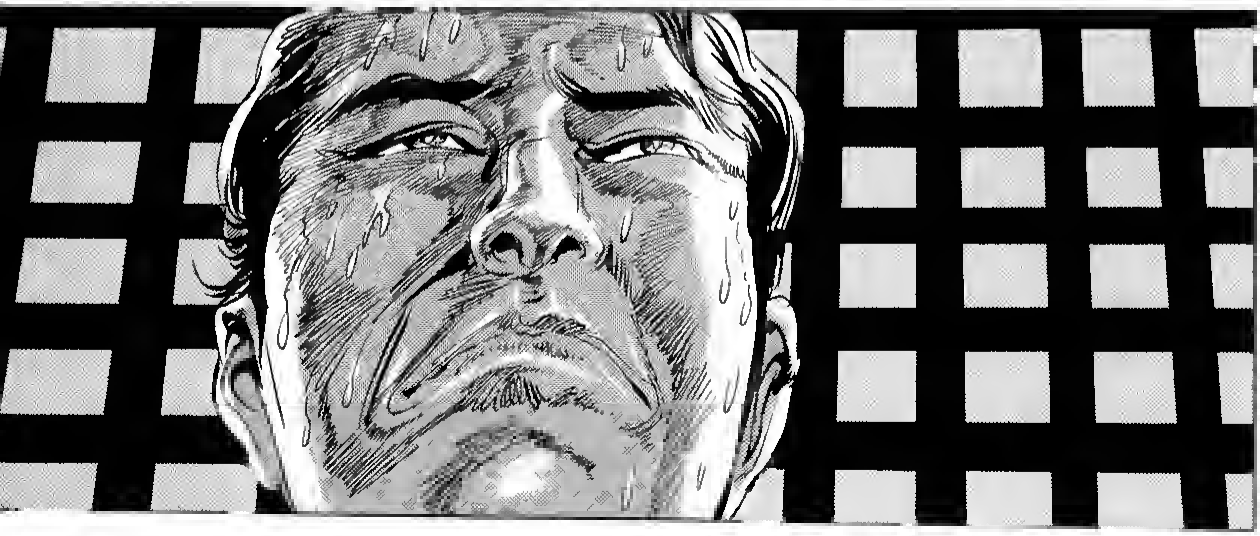
SO THAT YOU COULD INSTRUCT THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY?!
YOU WOULD FORSAKE OUR FAMILY SCHOOL...
I JUST HEARD WHAT YOU DID TO UPSET OUR LORD!
TOSHI-KANE!
DASH!
SIGN: OWARI-NAKA MANSION

GRAB
MY BROTHER ...
YOU ARE A DISGRACE!
COME WITH ME TO OUR TEMPLE

THE AKASA-GARBHA BODHI-SATTVA SAVES SOULS BY CLEANSING THEM OF DESIRE AND WICKEDNESS
EACH TIME I COME HERE, I HOPE TO LEARN SOMETHING OF THAT SPIRIT


BUT I HAVE BEEN FORCED TIME AND AGAIN TO SLAUGHTER PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THE SCHEMES OF THE EDO YAGYU
HOW MANY PEOPLE?
AT LEAST SIXTY HAVE MET WITH DEATH BECAUSE OF ME

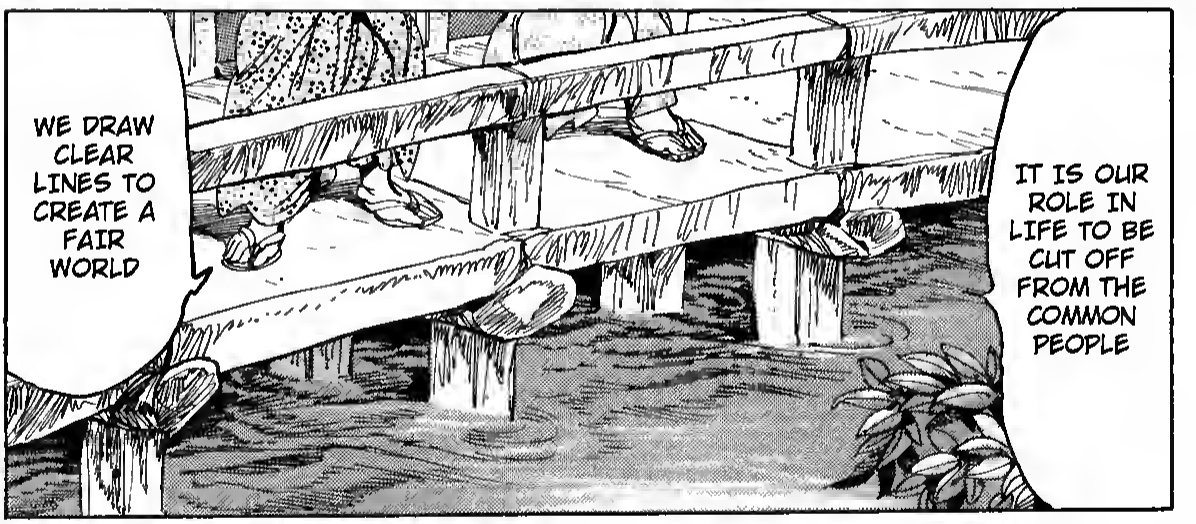
SHLINK!
STAB!
SHLINK!
HACK!
SLASH!



THE EDO YAGYU SENT SO MANY AFTER YOU?
MOST OF THEM WERE POOR
THEY ONLY AGREED BECAUSE OF THE LURE OF MONEY
THEY WERE NOT TO BE HATED
SPLOOSH!
SO YOU HATE THE ROOT OF THIS EVIL: THE EDO YAGYU
MY BROTHER ...

OUR DUTY AS SAMURAI IS TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF THE COMMON PEOPLE AS JUDGES OF RIGHT AND WRONG
WE YAGYU ARE NOT FARMERS OR ARTISANS

THAT IS HOW WE MAKE OUR LIVING
HOWEVER, OUR FAMILY, MUNEFUYU AND I ESPECIALLY, DEALS EXCLUSIVELY IN THE ART OF WAR


WE DRAW CLEAR LINES TO CREATE A FAIR WORLD
IT IS OUR ROLE IN LIFE TO BE CUT OFF FROM THE COMMON PEOPLE

IT DOES ILL TO OUR NATION
THEY MUST NOT TOY WITH PEOPLE BY TEMPTING THEM WITH GOLD TO FURTHER THEIR PLANS
THOSE IN OUR WORLD MUST NOT BE ATTACHED TO VULGAR DESIRES OR PROTECTING THEMSELVES ..

MUNEFUYU HAS INDEED SULLIED OUR FAMILY'S REPUTATION FOR SWORDMANSHIP
THAT IS WHY ...
AS A MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY, I MUST DESTROY HIM
BUT THEN IT WILL LIKELY BE AS OUR LORD GUESSES
YOU WILL BE CHOSEN AS THE INSTRUCTOR TO THE SHOGUN'S FAMILY
I WILL WORK FOR NONE OTHER THAN OUR LORD!
BUT ...
WHAP!
EVEN YOUR BROTHER CANNOT IGNORE YOU DISOBEYING A DIRECT ORDER
IN THAT CASE, I WILL RUN

AND RUN AWAY WITH YOU, YOUNG MASTER!
PAT!
PAT!
AND IF THAT HAPPENS, I'LL DROP EVERY-THING ...
WELL?
MY BROTHER ...
MY PLACE IS BY YOUR SIDE, YOUNG MASTER!
WITHOUT MY POSITION, I'D BE NO MORE THAN A BEGGAR
NO ONE CAN KNOW WHAT SKILLS MUNEFUYU MIGHT POSSESS
HE IS STUBBORN IN FOLLOWING THE PATH OF THE SWORD
BUT IN THE END, HE SAID THIS:

THAT EVENING
A LETTER WAS SENT TO RENYA
?
HMM...
PERHAPS THE MATCH'S OUTCOME IS NOT AS CLEAR AS PREDICTED, MY LORD
IT'S FROM MUNE-FUYU
SOMEONE LEFT THIS WITH THE GATEKEEPER
I SWEAR THAT I WILL GO ALONE AND HUMBLY ASK THAT YOU COME
WE FACE EACH OTHER THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW
I HAVE SOMETHING YOU SHOULD HEAR
I WILL BE IN SEKIGUCHI-GAHARA AT THREE O'CLOCK

HE CONTROLS THE SECRET IGA ARMY!
PERHAPS IT IS JUST A MEETING
BUT HE WROTE THAT HE WOULD GO THERE ALONE
EVEN NOW THAT DIRTY SCHEMER IS TRYING TO LAY A TRAP FOR YOU!
SLAP!
CHARACTER REVOLVE
転
IT IS NO DIFFERENT FROM RUNNING AWAY
I AM THE HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE
RIP!
IGNORE THIS GARBAGE!
FORGET IT!
IF I IGNORE IT...

DAWN ...
THEN I AM GOING WITH YOU!
THE PAIR MAKES THEIR WAY TOWARD SEKIGUCHI-GAHARA
BONG!
BONG!
THE FIELDS ARE COVERED IN BAMBOO GRASS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE
EACH OF THEM WEARS ...
A SHIRT OF MAIL UNDER THEIR CLOTHES

THEY SEE A SINGLE MOUNTED SAMURAI IN THE DISTANCE
THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANYONE ELSE IN THE AREA
BE AT EASE
I CHOSE THIS PLACE TO PROVE THAT I AM ALONE
ARE YOU MUNEFUYU YAGYU?

TOSHIKANE YAGYU...
ON THE ROAD TO EDO, YOU WERE ATTACKED BY HIRED ASSASSINS
INDEED, MUNE-FUYU YAGYU ...
SO MANY TIMES THAT IT IS A WONDER THAT I STILL DRAW BREATH!
HOWEVER, THOSE ATTACKS WERE PLANNED ...
BY MY BROTHER RETSUDO ALONE
I DID NOT WILL THEM
L-LIAR!
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO GAVE RETSUDO ALL THAT GOLD IN THE FIRST PLACE!
RETSUDO STOLE CLAN MONEY IN A SCHEME HE CONCOCTED ALONG WITH MY APPOINTED MINISTER TO BECOME A FEUDAL LORD ONCE MORE

MUNEFUYU! IF THIS IS TRUE, THEN WHAT OF YOUR OWN RESPONSIBILITY?!
THIS ...
IS MINISTER YAMAZAKI'S TOPKNOT
I HAD HIM COMMIT SEPPUKU FOR HIS CRIMES
I CAME HERE TO EXPLAIN MYSELF BEFORE THAT!
YOUR MASTER AND I WILL HAVE A MATCH IN WHICH ONE OF US MAY DIE
WHOOSH!
COME!
LET IT KILL ME!
IF YOU STILL BELIEVE I AM THE MAN RESPONSIBLE, THEN LET THAT ARROW FLY AND KILL ME!

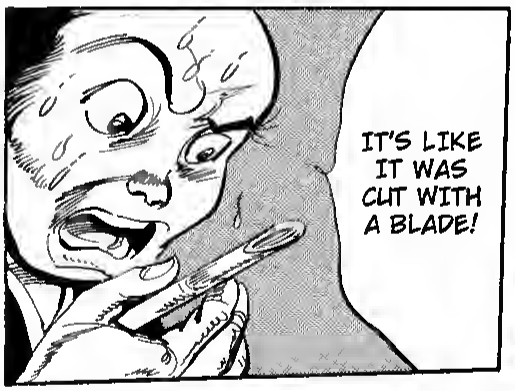
LIKE A SLEEPWALKER'S, GENPACHI'S HANDS MOVED OF THEIR OWN ACCORD, PULLING BACK THE BOWSTRING WITH ALL THEIR MIGHT AND LETTING TWO ARROWS FLY!
STRAIGHT AT MUNEFUYU'S HEART!
BOTH FLEW TRUE...
FWIP!
FWIP!

WHISH!
WHOOSH!
I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE OWARI YAGYU BLADE IN ACTION
BUT I DO NOT FEAR IT
HOWEVER, YOUR SERVANT IS CORRECT

AND THUS, I OFFER YOU MY HUMBLE APOLOGY AS THE HEAD OF THE YAGYU FAMILY
WHIP!
WHOOSH!
IF YOU HOLD ANGER IN YOUR MIND ...
IT IS DIFFICULT TO THINK CLEARLY
WE ARE BOTH YAGYUS, MEN OF THE SWORD
I HOPE YOU ARE ABLE TO FACE ME WITH A PURE MIND AND ALL OF YOUR STRENGTH

WAS IT AN ILLUSION?
WERE MY EYES PLAYING TRICKS ON ME?!
HE WAS BOWING RIGHT HERE!

SHOOT!

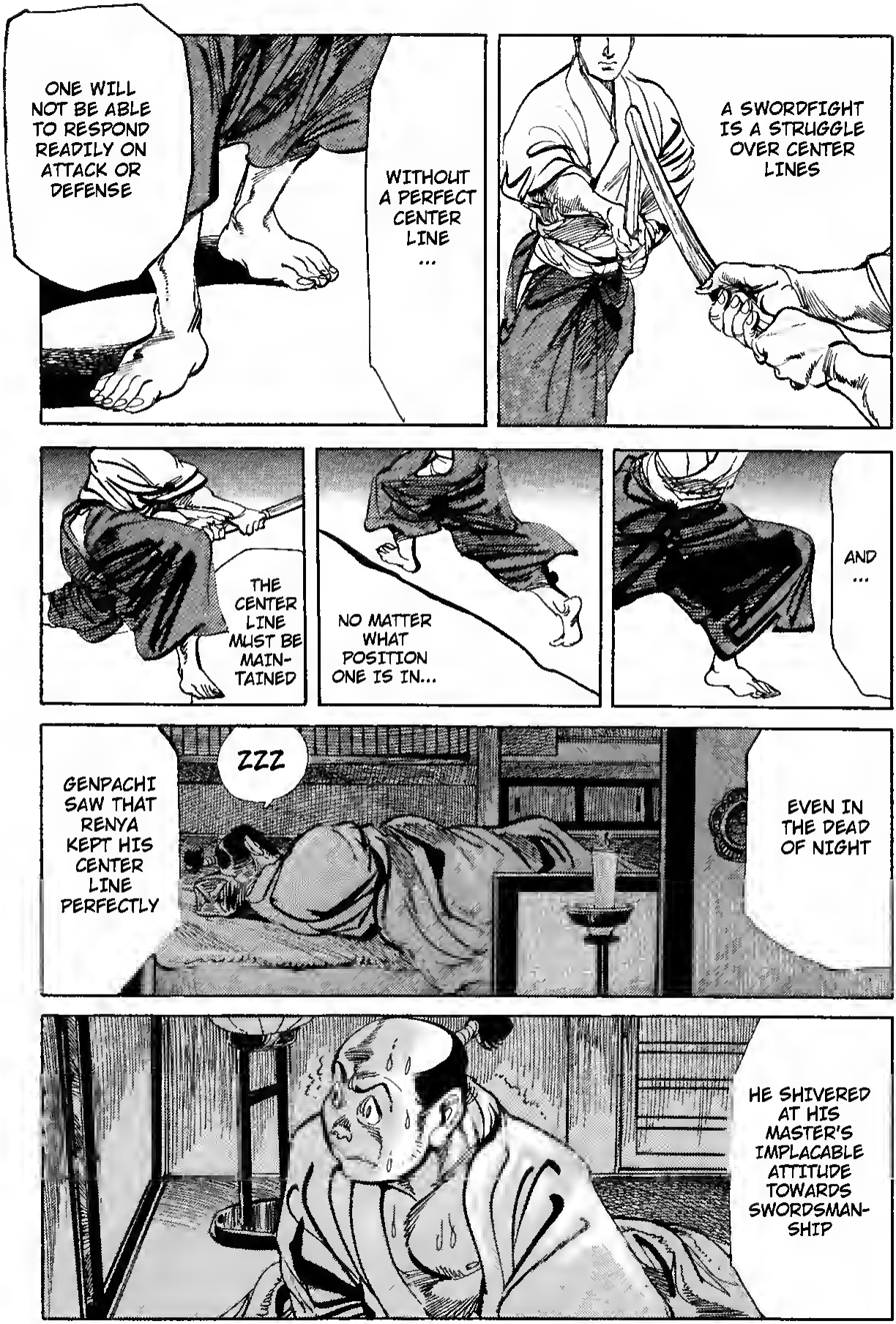

IT'S LIKE IT WAS CUT WITH A BLADE!

MUNEFUYU HAS MASTERED HIS OWN MIND

A-AND LOOK AT THIS ARROW!
IT WAS REAL
GEN-PACHI ...

THAT IS THE HIGHEST GOAL OF A SWORDSMAN
YOUNG MASTER ...
WHERE WERE YOU?!
WE WERE LOOK-ING FOR YOU!
FROM THAT POINT FORWARD, RENYA FREED HIMSELF FROM UNWORTHY THOUGHTS

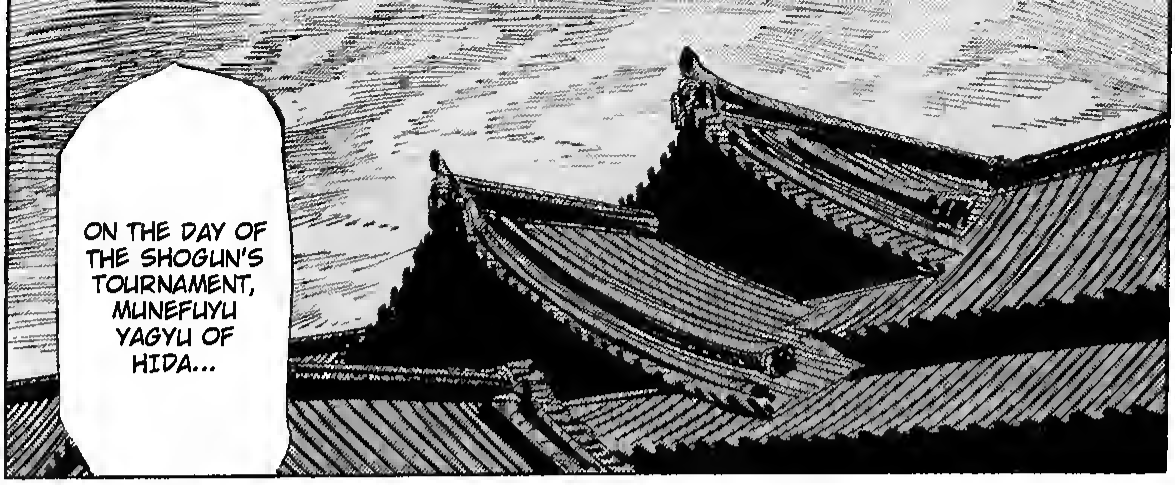
HE MAINTAINED HIS CENTER LINE
AND AT ALL TIMES ...
NOT A SINGLE WORD PASSED HIS LIPS
THE CENTER LINE IS A LINE SHOWING ONE'S CENTER OF GRAVITY AND THE STARTING POINT OF ALL TECHNIQUES
WITHOUT A PROPER CENTER LINE, ONE WILL STUMBLE FROM EVEN A SLIGHT PUSH
AND WHEN ATTACK-ING ...
AN OPPONENT WILL READILY BE ABLE TO DODGE, AND THEN SEND ONE TUMBLING WITH ONLY THE LIGHTEST OF EFFORTS

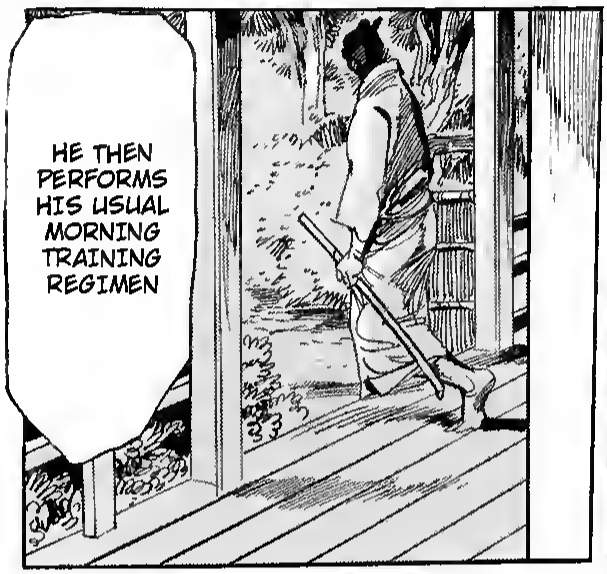

ONE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RESPOND READILY ON ATTACK OR DEFENSE
WITHOUT A PERFECT CENTER LINE ...
A SWORDFIGHT IS A STRUGGLE OVER CENTER LINES
THE CENTER LINE MUST BE MAIN-TAINED
NO MATTER WHAT POSITION ONE IS IN...
AND ...
GENPACHI SAW THAT RENYA KEPT HIS CENTER LINE PERFECTLY
ZZZ
EVEN IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT
HE SHIVERED AT HIS MASTER'S IMPLACABLE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SWORDSMAN-SHIP

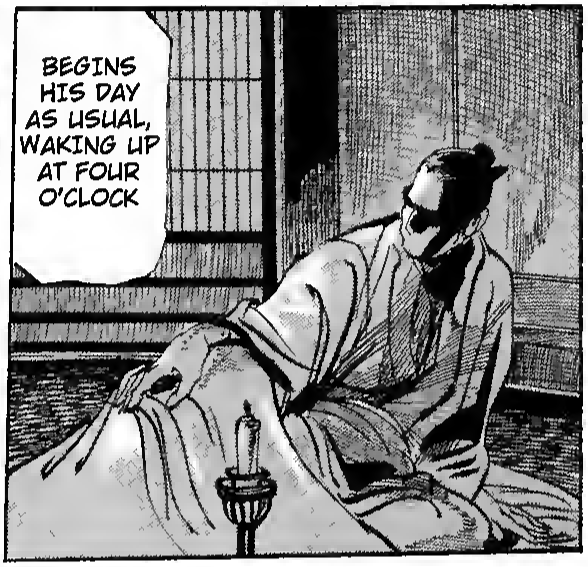
● CHAPTER 29 - FIN ●

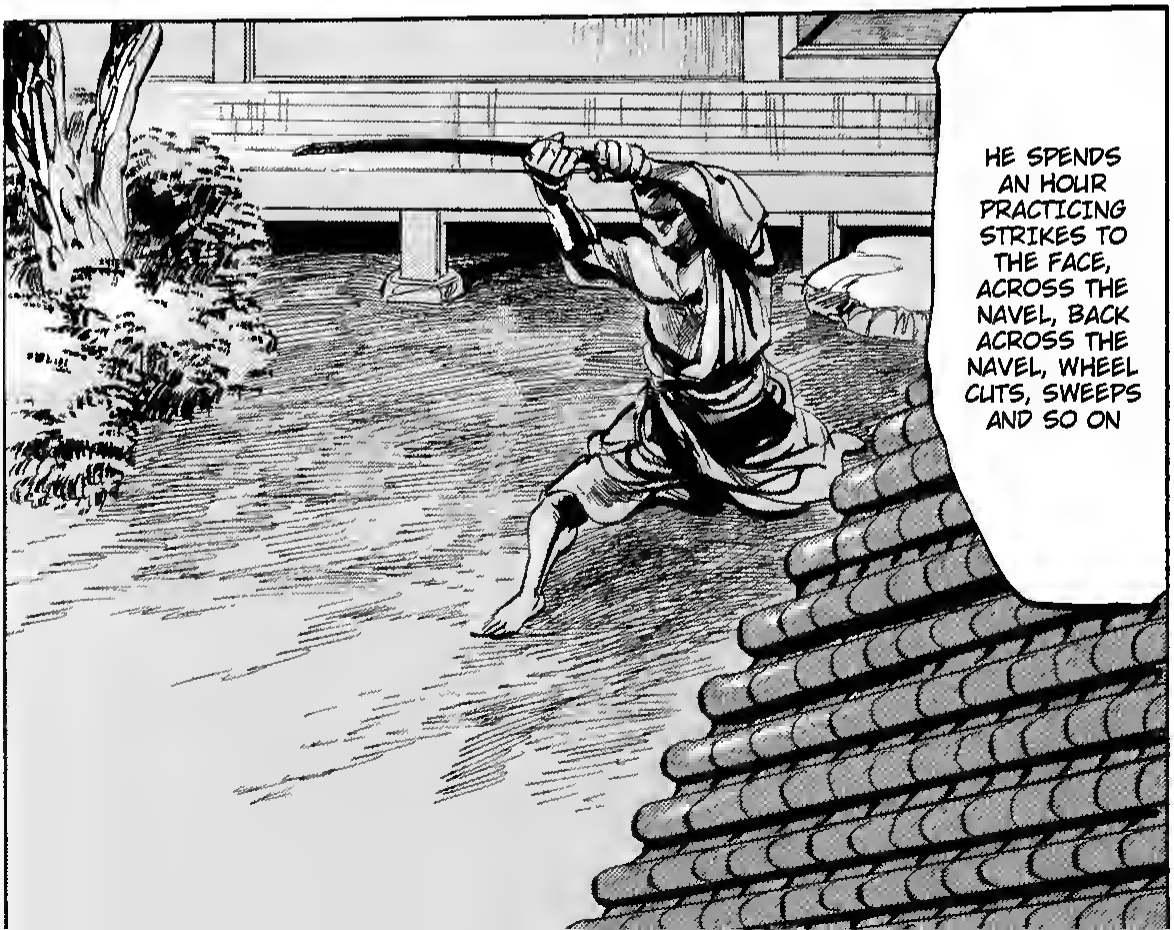
[第三十話]激突

CHAPTER 30: CLASH


ON THE DAY OF THE SHOGUN'S TOURNAMENT, MUNEFUYU YAGYU OF HIDA...


HE THEN PERFORMS HIS USUAL MORNING TRAINING REGIMEN


BEGINS HIS DAY AS USUAL, WAKING UP AT FOUR O'CLOCK


HE SPENDS AN HOUR PRACTICING STRIKES TO THE FACE, ACROSS THE NAVEL, BACK ACROSS THE NAVEL, WHEEL CUTS, SWEEPS AND SO ON

AS STEAM RISES FROM HIS BODY, HIS MENTAL PREPARA-TION IS COMPLETE
HE PURIFIES HIMSELF BY RINSING HIS BODY WITH TWENTY BUCKETS OF WELL WATER
HE CHANGES INTO HIS TRAINING CLOTHES AND GOES TO THE DOJO
HE SPENDS AN HOUR STANDING STILL AS A STATUE, JUST AS HE DOES ON MOST DAYS

AT SIX O'CLOCK, HIS BEST STUDENTS ARRIVE
EVERYONE FOCUSES ON THEIR OWN PERSONAL TRAINING
OTO-GURO ...
OKUMA ...
ATTACK ME FROM WHERE YOU STAND
YES, SIR!

SHUFFLE
STRIKE ME DEAD!
WHERE IS YOUR KILLER SPIRIT!
YES, SIR!
IF YOU HOLD BACK ON ME, I'LL KILL YOU BOTH!
ROOOAAAH!
KYAAAH!

THEY COULD NOT MOVE
THEY WERE HELD BACK BY THE POWERFUL WAVES OF FIGHTING SPIRIT EMITTED BY THEIR TEACHER
BUT NEITHER OF MUNEFUYU'S STUDENTS COULD ADVANCE
IF YOU ARE MARTIAL ARTISTS, THEN YOU SHOULD CONSIDER DYING UPON THE SWORD TO BE A BLESSING!
TWITCH
TWITCH
WHOOSH!
GRAAAH!

ドタ!
WHUMP!
ド!
WHAM!
SOMEHOW, THE WOODEN SWORDS MUNEFUYU'S STUDENTS WERE HOLDING APPEARED IN HIS HAND
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR TEACHING

TODAY'S MATCH SHOULD PROVE IT ONCE AGAIN TO AT LEAST THE SHOGUN AND THE FEUDAL LORDS
NO MATTER HOW FAR ONE WALKS ALONG THE PATH OF THE WARRIOR, IT NEVER CEASES
MASTER, YOUR IMPROVEMENTS IN BOTH SPIRIT AND TECHNIQUE OVER THE YEARS...
PANT
HUFF
PUFF
THEY ARE SIMPLY SUPER-HUMAN
IT IS ONLY BECAUSE THE YAGYU SHIN-KAGE STYLE PROHIBITS SPARRING WITH OUTSIDERS THAT THE WHOLE WORLD DOESN'T KNOW YOUR TRUE WORTH
TO TRULY FLOW WITH A CLARITY OF MIND IS A DIFFICULT THING TO ACHIEVE
SHING!

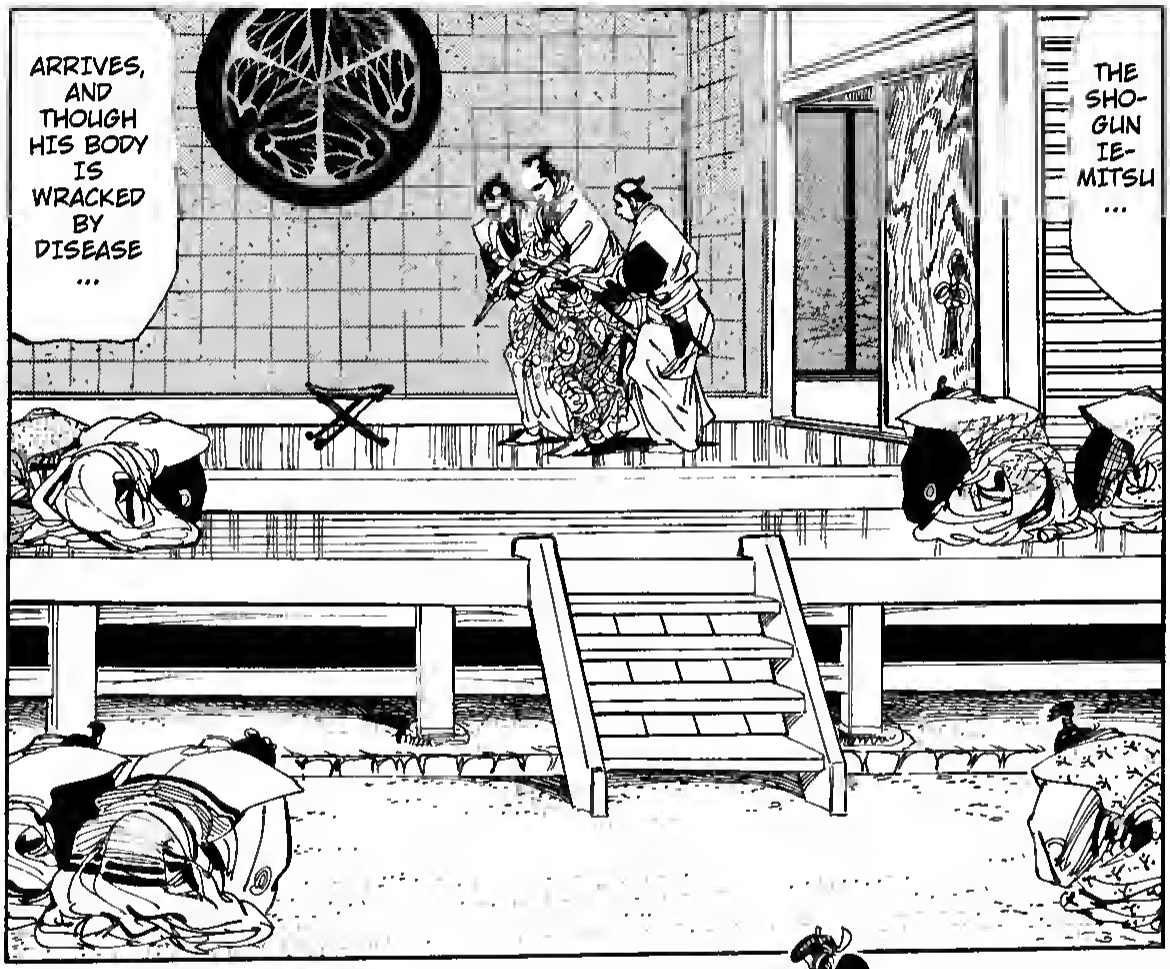
HIS FACE IS SHAVED AND HIS HAIR IS DRESSED
THE DOJO IS FILLED WITH THE WHISTLE OF STEEL THROUGH THE AIR AS HE PRACTICES DRAWING AND SWINGING THE SWORD FOR AN HOUR
WHISH!
WHISH!
HE THEN WASHES AWAY THE SWEAT FROM HIS TRAINING
SPLASH!
A SIMPLE AFFAIR AS ALWAYS, IT CONSISTS OF BROWN RICE, MISO SOUP WITH DAIKON RADISH AND CARROT AND BOILED SARDINES WITH GINGER
HIS HUNGER REACHES ITS ZENITH AT HALF PAST EIGHT, AND HE TAKES ONE OF HIS TWO DAILY MEALS

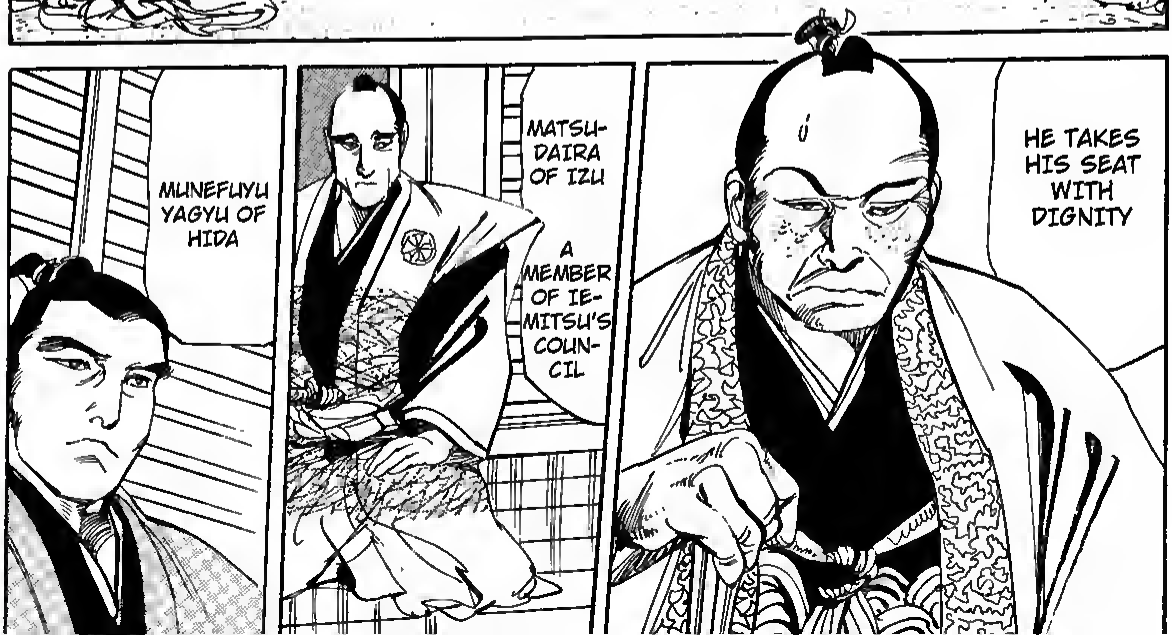
HE HAD BEEN ABSTAINING FROM INTIMICY WITH HIS WIFE FOR YEARS
THINK OF YOUR LORD'S WISHES!
LISTEN, YAGYU
OWARI-KAMI MAN-SION
YOU MUST NOT FORGET THEM!

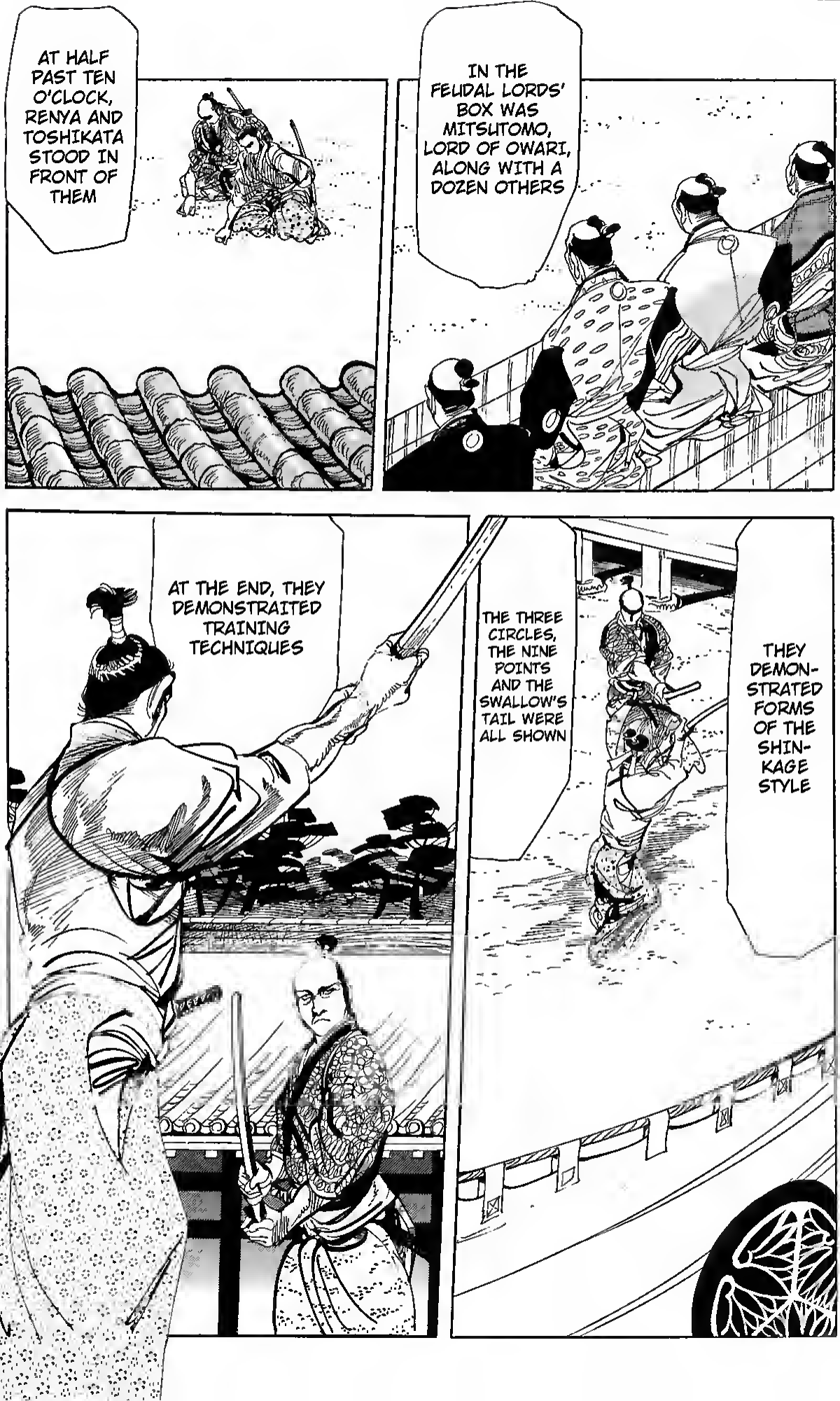
YOU WILL HEED THE MINISTER'S WORDS, WILL YOU NOT?!
SLURP!
TOSHI-KANE*!
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU
ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
IF TOSHIKANE WINS TODAY, HE PLANS TO FLEE!
BUT WHY?!
WHAT?!
WE WILL ALL WEAR CHAIN SHIRTS AND WAIT IN AMBUSH AT THE SAKURADA GATE OF EDO CASTLE
WHEN HE COMES, WE WILL CUT HIM DOWN!

I DO NOT GIVE THIS ORDER AS AN INSTRUCTOR, BUT AS HEAD ATTENDANT!
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!
YES, SIR!
IT IS THE RULE OF WARRIORS ...
TO KILL THOSE WHO BETRAY THEIR MASTERS
JINGLE
GEN-PACHI
ENTRUSTED ME WITH THE DUTY OF PROTECTING TOSHIKANE!
I WON'T LET ANYONE HARM THE YOUNG MASTER!
THE FORMER INSTRUCTOR, NYOUNSAI ...

BONG!


THE SHO-GUN IE-MITSU ...
ARRIVES, AND THOUGH HIS BODY IS WRACKED BY DISEASE ...


HE TAKES HIS SEAT WITH DIGNITY
MATSU-DAIRA OF IZU
A MEMBER OF IE-MITSU'S COUN-CIL
MUNEFUYU YAGYU OF HIDA

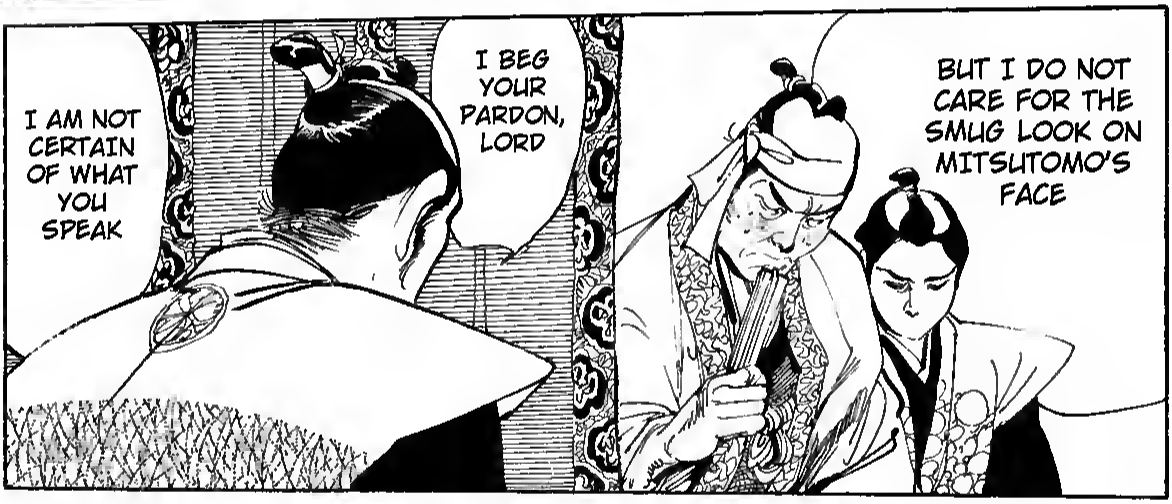

AT HALF PAST TEN O'CLOCK, RENYA AND TOSHIKATA STOOD IN FRONT OF THEM
IN THE FEUDAL LORDS' BOX WAS MITSUTOMO, LORD OF OWARI, ALONG WITH A DOZEN OTHERS
AT THE END, THEY DEMONSTRAITED TRAINING TECHNIQUES
THE THREE CIRCLES, THE NINE POINTS AND THE SWALLOW'S TAIL WERE ALL SHOWN
THEY DEMON-STRATED FORMS OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE

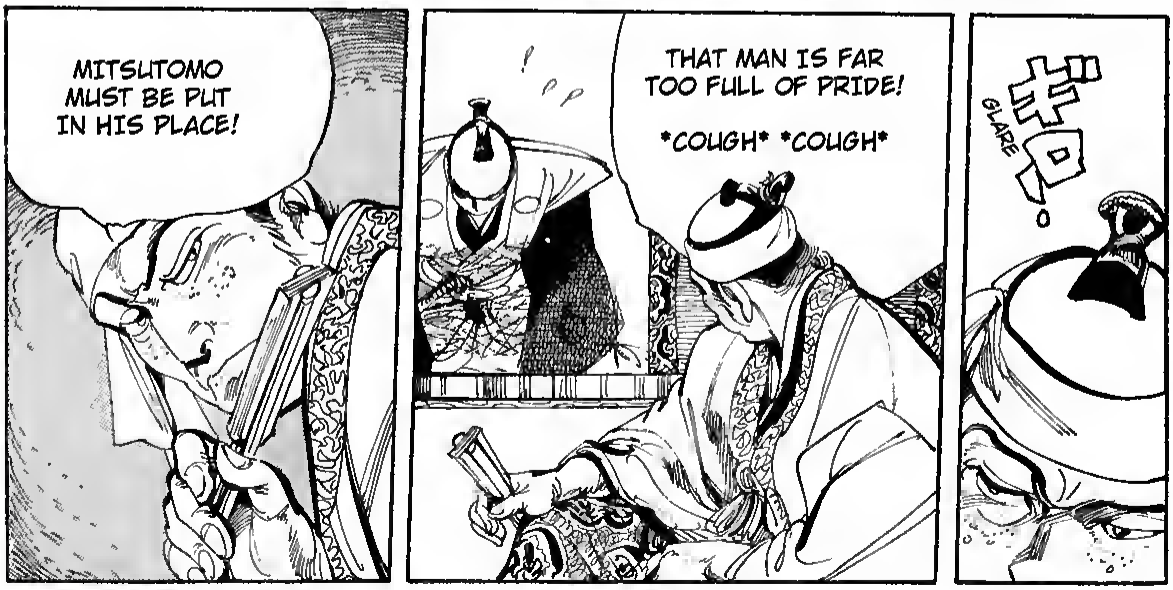
HROOOOOAH!!
KYAAAAH!
THIS SHIN-KAGE STYLE TRAINING WAS A FORM OF SPARRING, BUT IT DID NOT LIMIT TARGETS
THIS MEANT THAT TO BLUNDER WAS TO RISK INJURY OR EVEN DEATH

RENYA WAS TRANQUIL, BUT TOSHIKATA WAS DRENCHED WITH SWEAT
RENYA TOOK TWO AND TOSHIKATA TOOK ONE
OF THE THREE ROUNDS BETWEEN RENYA AND HIS BROTHER TOSHIKATA ...
MITSU-TOMO OWARI
THE CROWD STIRRED WITH ADMI-RATION FOR RENYA
MITSU-TOMO, OF COURSE, SHOWED PRIDE IN HIS FAMILY'S STYLE
IT WAS CLASSIC, ORTHODOX SHIN-KAGE STYLE
SUCH SKILLS!

WHAT DO YOU THINK, MUNEFUYU?
WE ARE ONCE AGAIN IN AWE OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S EFFICACY
IT WAS A PRAISE-WORTHY PERFOR-MANCE
TOSHIKANE READ HIS OPPONENT'S INTENT BEFORE HIS OPPONENT EVEN MOVED
COUNCIL MEMBER NAOTAKA II, WHO GOT ALONG POORLY WITH MUNEFUYU'S FATHER TAJIMA, AND CAME UP WITH THE SCHEME TO KEEP MUNEFUYU FROM BEING A FEUDAL LORD
GWA HA HA HA!
IF YOU CANNOT, YOUR POSITION AS INSTRUCTOR TO THE SHOGUN WILL BE FORFEIT AND BECOMING A FEUDAL LORD AGAIN WOULD BE ABSURD
I DO HOPE YOU BEST HIM!
YOU WILL FACE HIM YOUR-SELF THIS AFTER-NOON

LORD MATSU-DAIRA ...
I AM NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD, BUT THIS IS A FINE SIGHT TO SEE AS I PASS INTO THE NEXT
THE SWALLOW'S TAIL THOSE TWO PERFORMED WAS QUITE MARVEL-OUS


BUT I DO NOT CARE FOR THE SMUG LOOK ON MITSUTOMO'S FACE
I BEG YOUR PARDON, LORD
I AM NOT CERTAIN OF WHAT YOU SPEAK

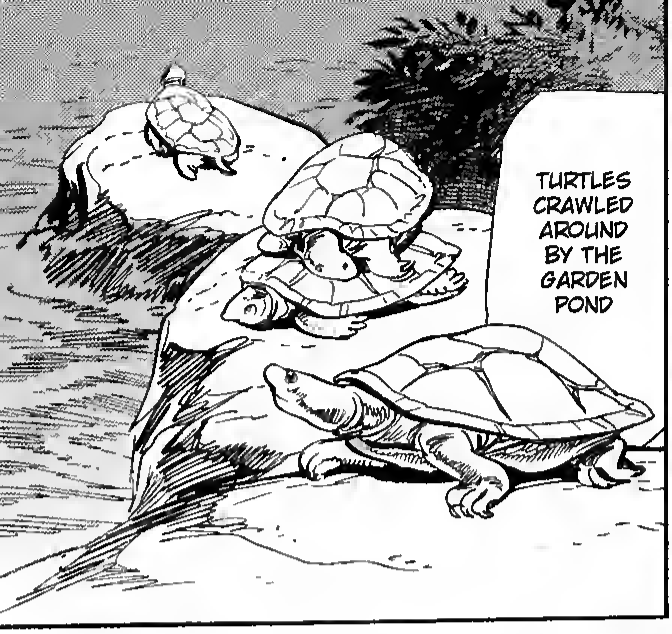

MITSUTOMO MUST BE PUT IN HIS PLACE!
THAT MAN IS FAR TOO FULL OF PRIDE!
COUGH *COUGH*
GLARE

MUNE-FUYU
COUGH
WILL YOU USE LIVE STEEL?
I WILL DO AS YOU WILL, MY LORD
I BEG YOUR PARDON, MY LORD ...
YOU WILL BE ABLE TO BEST TOSHIKANE, CORRECT?
IN WAR, THERE ARE NO CER-TAN-TIES
BUT I SWEAR THAT I WILL DO MY BEST TO WIN

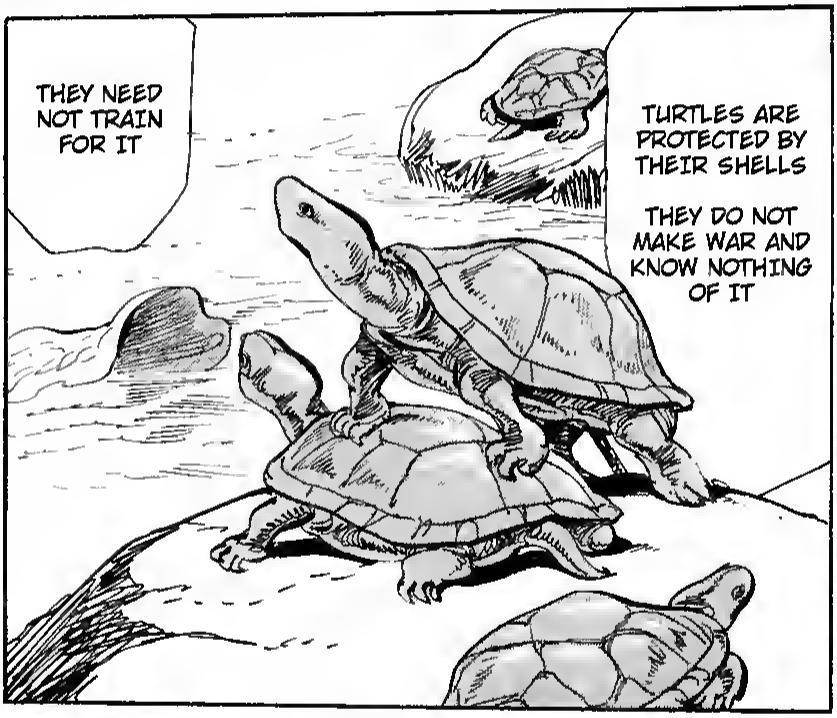
WITH MEN OF THEIR CALIBER, WOOD OR STEEL WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE
...
THE MATCH WAS SCHEDULED FOR TWO O'CLOCK
MUNEFUYU RETURNED TO HIS RESIDENCE ...
AND TOLD HIS SERVANTS TO WAKE HIM AT ONE O'CLOCK
MEANWHILE ...
RENYA SPENT HIS TIME IN MEDITATION AT THE OWARI MANSION
AT ONE O'CLOCK HE SPOKE TO HIS LORD, MITSUTOMO

LOSE, TOSHI-KANE
YOU MUSTN'T WIN
LOSE...
RENYA HEADS BACK TO EDO CASTLE
LED BY ATTEN-DANTS FROM THE SHOGUN'S HOUSE ...
RENYA CROSSED THE BRIDGE IN FRONT OF THE SAKURADA GATE
IT WAS THERE THAT HE NOTICED THAT HIS BROTHER TOSHIKATA AND A FEW OTHER TOP STUDENTS WERE NOT AMONG THE CLANSMEN THAT ACCOMPANIED HIM

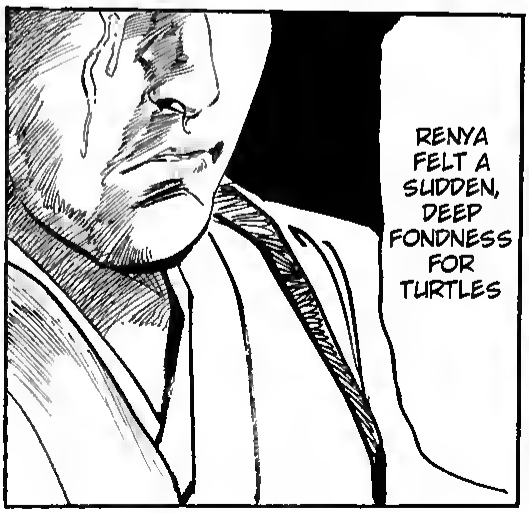
お茶
SIGN: TEA
HE COULD EASILY GUESS THE REASON FOR THEIR ABSENCE

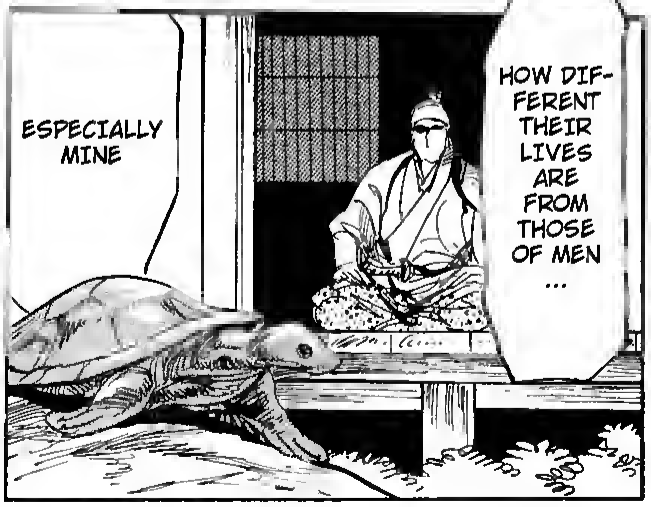

TURTLES CRAWLED AROUND BY THE GARDEN POND

HE WAITED IN A ROOM IN THE CASTLE FOR HIS TIME TO GO OUT


THEY NEED NOT TRAIN FOR IT
TURTLES ARE PROTECTED BY THEIR SHELLS
THEY DO NOT MAKE WAR AND KNOW NOTHING OF IT

WHAT A PEACEFUL, PLEASANT GROUP OF CREATURES
IT IS REFRESHING TO WATCH THEM


RENYA FELT A SUDDEN, DEEP FONDNESS FOR TURTLES


ESPECIALLY MINE
HOW DIFFERENT THEIR LIVES ARE FROM THOSE OF MEN ...

IN THE AFTERNOON, MATSUDAIRA OF IZU AND SIX OF HIS CLOSE ASSOCIATES WERE ALLOWED TO SIT WITH THE SHOGUN
AT A SIGNAL FROM THE HEAD ATTEN-DANT ...
MUNE-FUYU ENT-ERED FROM THE WEST
AND RENYA ENTERED FROM THE EAST

AFTER A BOW ...
THEY SUDDENLY SPRANG APART, OPENING A GAP OF SEVERAL PACES IN BETWEEN THEM
WHOOSH!

ROOOAAAAH!
HYAAAAAA!
THEIR CRIES REVERBERATED IN THE LUNGS OF THE OBSERVERS

IN A SILENT, TRANCE-LIKE STATE DEVOID OF SELF
LIKE ENLIGHT-ENED ZEN PRIESTS ...
BOTH FIGHTERS
STOOD PERFECTLY STILL...
THERE CAME A RUSH OF ENERGY LIKE A ROARING FLAME THAT WOULD REND RENYA'S HEART
BUT FROM MUNEFUYU'S BLADE ...

FOR A MOMENT, RENYA'S HEART STOPPED
BUT HE TOOK IN THE ENERGY THROUGH THE TIP OF HIS OWN SWORD
AND QUIETED IT IN HIS HILT
MY MIND IS WHAT TAKES IN MY ENEMY'S ENERGY
IF I MAKE A VOID OF MY MIND, THAT ENERGY WILL BE NOUGHT
BUT MUNE-FUYU'S MIND ...
WAS ALSO VOID

THEY WERE BOTH AT THE STATE THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE CALLED "MOON ON THE WATER"
WHILE THEIR BLADES RADIATED A DEADLY ENERGY, THIER MINDS WERE AS FORMLESS AS THE REFLECTION OF THE MOON ON THE SURFACE OF WATER
A PAIR OF SWALLOWS ...
DANCED IN THE AIR ABOVE THE GARDEN
BUT ONE FLEW BETWEEN THE PAIR AND SUDDENLY FELL DEAD

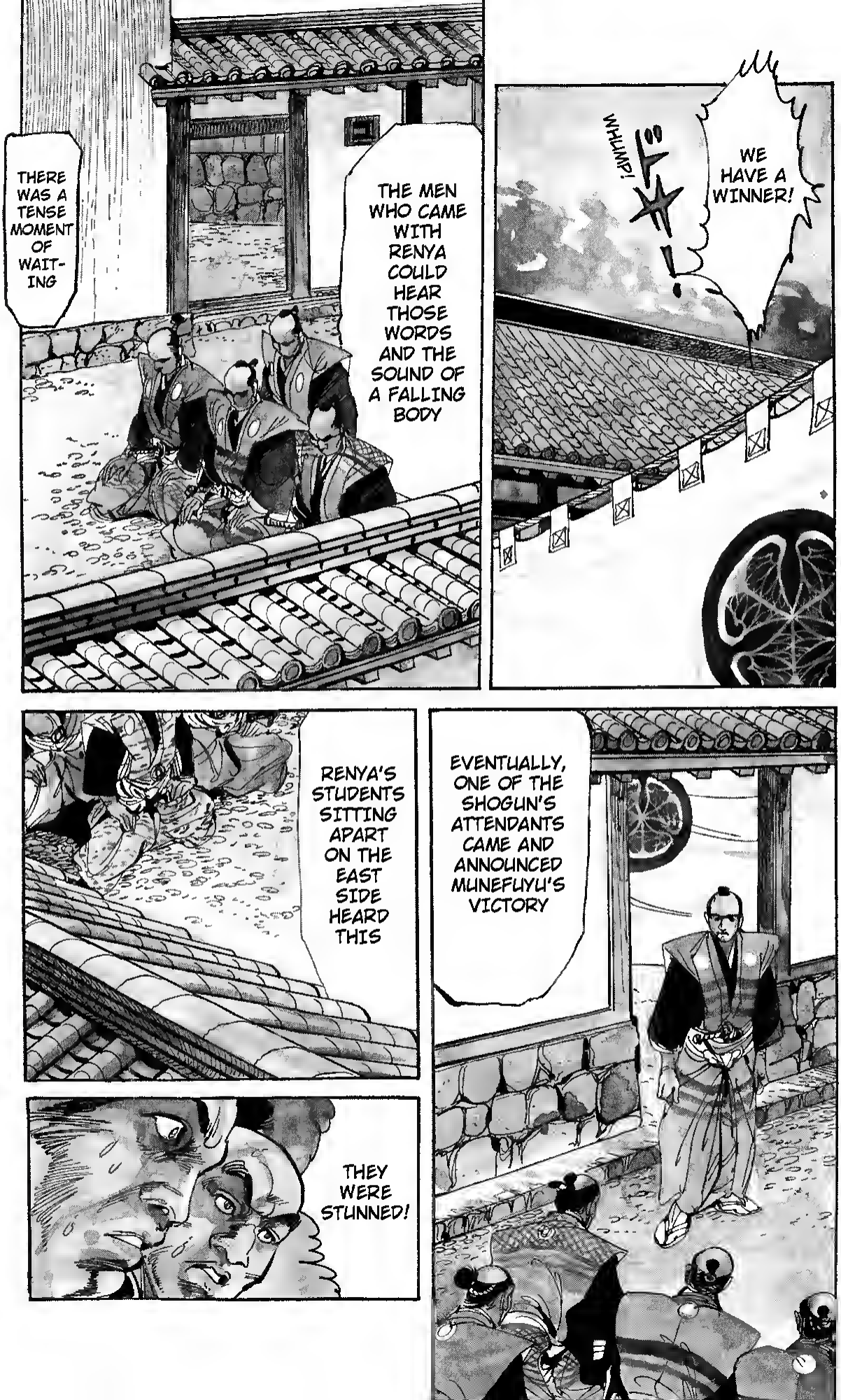
ONE OF THOSE TWO IS CERTAIN TO DIE
THERE WAS A SINGLE PETAL BLOWN ON A BREEZE
ONCE IN SWORD RANGE, THEY GLARED AT EACH OTHER FOR SEVERAL MINUTES
THEY MOVED CLOSER, INCH BY INCH
THEY MOVED AS ONE!
AS IT PASSED BETWEEN THE PAIR ...
WHOOSH!
WHOOSH!
THERE WAS A HARSH SOUND OF THE AIR RIPPING

CRACK!

WHUMP!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
CHAPTER 30 - FIN

[第三十一話] 敗中取勝 (はいちゅうしゅしょう)

CHAPTER 31: ILLUSIONARY DEFEAT


THERE WAS A TENSE MOMENT OF WAIT-ING
THE MEN WHO CAME WITH RENYA COULD HEAR THOSE WORDS AND THE SOUND OF A FALLING BODY
WHUMP!
WE HAVE A WINNER!
RENYA'S STUDENTS SITTING APART ON THE EAST SIDE HEARD THIS
EVENTUALLY, ONE OF THE SHOGUN'S ATTENDANTS CAME AND ANNOUNCED MUNEFUYU'S VICTORY
THEY WERE STUNNED!

MASTER!
MA-
THIS IS WHY YOU ARE MY INSTRUCTOR IN THE SWORD
WELL DONE, MUNEFUYU

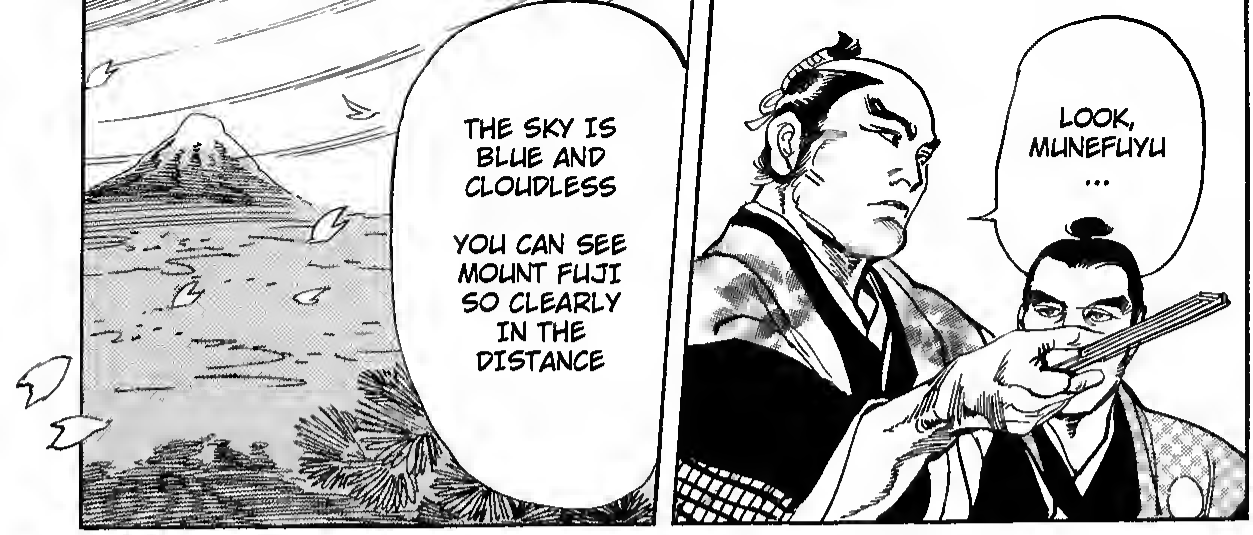
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD LATER BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

!?
FWIP!
WHO SHAVED RENYA'S HEAD ...
THEY CALLED THE HOUSE DOCTOR ...
UGH ...
AND REATTACHED HIS TORN EAR
STITCH-ED UP HIS SCALP ...
YOU HAVE SAVED THIS ELDER BROTHER OF YOURS!
THANK YOU!
LORD TOSHI-KANE!
RENYA REGAINED CONSCIOUS-NESS

THE NEXT DAY, MITSU-TOMO, LORD OF RENYA'S CLAN CAME TO VISIT
MY LORD
AS YOU WERE
YOU NEED NOT SIT UP FOR ME
HOW DOES HE FARE, DOUZEN?
THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS SKULL IS FRACTURED
HIS EAR WAS ALSO TORN, BUT IF HE RESTS PROPERLY, THERE WILL BE NO LASTING DAMAGE
NOW THAT THE EDO STYLE HAS TRIUMPHED OVER OUR OWARI STYLE, THE SHOGUN IS MOST PLEASED AND HIS ENMITY TOWARD ME SHOULD LESSEN
YOU DID WELL IN HOLDING BACK DURING YOUR MATCH
I DID NOT
I FOUGHT WITH ALL OF MY SKILL

THEN...
HE SAYS HE DID NOT HOLD BACK
ALL HIS SKILL?
I ORDERED HIM TO LOSE
IT IS ONLY NATURAL THAT THIS WOULD CAUSE HIM CONFUSION AND DULL HIS SKILLS
BUT, MATSU-MAE
IT WAS A TRUE LOSS
IN EDO CASTLE, THE PRAISES HEAPED ON MUNEFUYU WERE WITHOUT END
HE HAS NEVER WAVERED IN THAT DUTY
TOSHIKANE IS NOT TO BE LOOKED DOWN UPON
HE IS MY INSTRUCTOR IN THE SWORD
YES, MY LORD

LORD MUNEFUYU SURE PUT TOSHIKANE, THE WILLFULL GENIUS OF OWARI, IN HIS PLACE!
HIS SKILLS MAY EXCEED THOSE OF EVEN HIS FATHER TAJIMA OR BROTHER JUBEI!
I HAVE HEARD ...
THE SHOGUN SECRETLY RESTORED THE YAGYU FAMILY'S FEUDAL LORDSHIP
LORD COUNSELOR ...

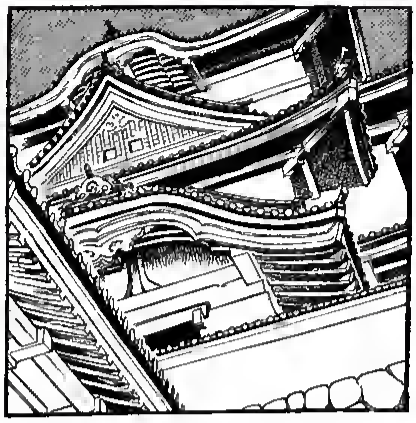

THE SKY IS BLUE AND CLOUDLESS
YOU CAN SEE MOUNT FUJI SO CLEARLY IN THE DISTANCE
LOOK, MUNEFUYU ...

AS A MEMBER OF TOSHIKANE'S FAMILY, IT TRULY PLEASES ME TO HEAR THIS
BY THE SAME TOKEN ...

I MUST COMPLIMENT YOUR SKILL FOR BESTING HIM

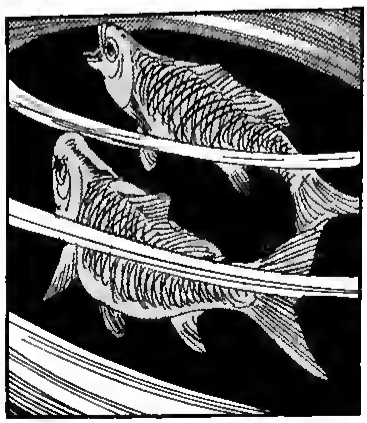
INDEED
IT IS A REFRESHING SIGHT, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I SEE IT
JUST AS I ADMIRE THIS VIEW OF MOUNT FUJI...
I ADMIRE TOSHIKANE, MY IRREPLACABLE INSTRUCTOR IN THE SWORD

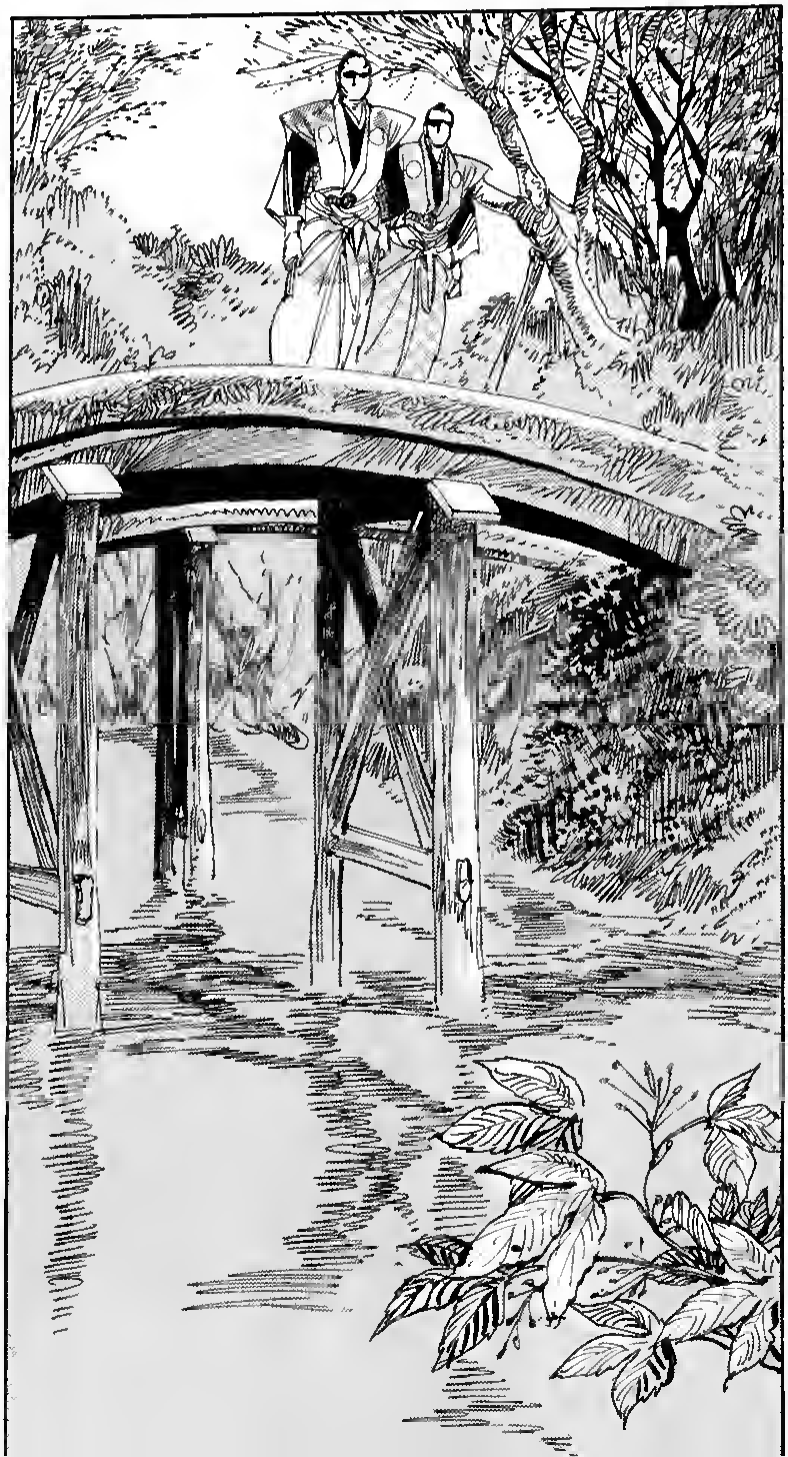
I DID NOT BEST TOSHIKANE
!
LORD COUN-SELOR ...
?
TOSHIKANE, WHAT DID MUNEFUYU MEAN WHEN HE SAID HE DID NOT BEST YOU?
HMM ...
...?
HE SAYS HE DID NOT WIN?
RENYA'S BROTHER TOSHIKATA



I FOUGHT WITH ALL OF MY SKILL
TOSHI-KANE ...

EVERY TIME I ASK, HE SIMPLY SAYS HE FOUGHT WITH ALL OF HIS SKILL
I CAN'T UNDER-STAND IT





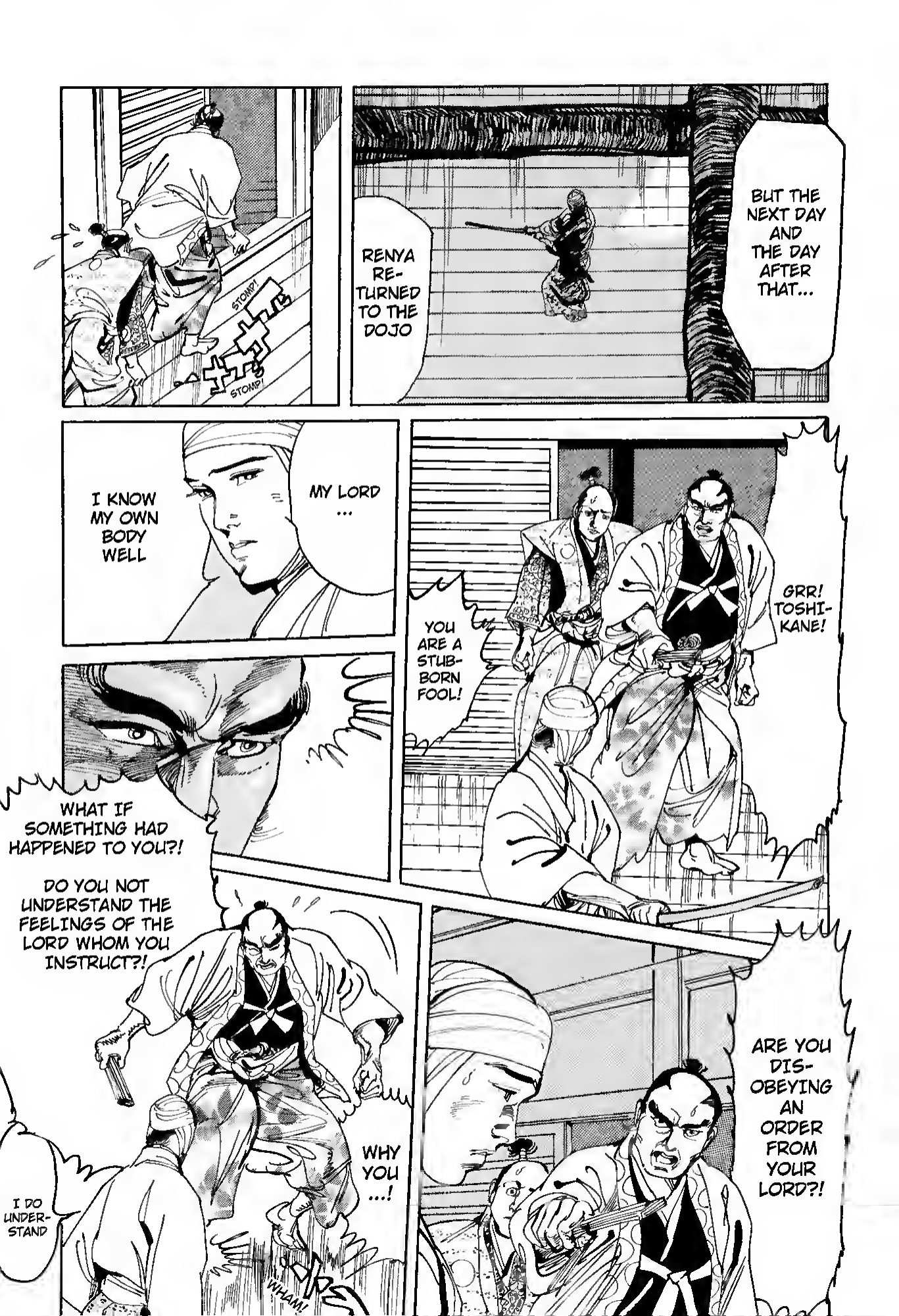
HOWEVER, SINCE THAT MATCH, A FEW OF MY TOP STUDENTS HAVE NOTICED THAT MY TECHNIQUE HAS WEAKENED
MANY NOTABLE PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE SHOGUN HIMSELF HAVE NO DOUBT IN MY VICTORY
LORD COUN-SELOR ...
THOSE STUDENTS NOTICED THAT I CANNOT STRETCH OR BEND MY THUMB FURTHER THAN THIS
HAVE BEEN CRUSHED
THE BONES IN MY RIGHT THUMB...
I SEE...
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
A BROKEN RIGHT THUMB?
NOW I UNDER-STAND!
SLAP!

IN THE MATCH ...
JUST BEFORE MUNEFUYU STRUCK TOSHIKANE'S HEAD...
TOSHIKANE MOVED FASTER THAN ANYONE COULD SEE
HE CRUSHED MUNEFUYU'S THUMB WITH A WEAVING STRIKE!
AHA!
THAT MEANS THE TIP OF MUNEFUYU'S SWORD WOULD HAVE ONLY SLIPPED FORWARD AND BRUSHED THE SIDE OF RENYA'S HEAD!
NOW I SEE!
IF THEY HAD BEEN FIGHTING WITH LIVE BLADES...
TOSHIKANE WOULD HAVE DONE MUCH MORE THAN BREAK MUNEFUYU'S THUMB

SHUNK!
IT IS SUN TZU'S "ILLUSIONARY DEFEAT"
HE GAVE THE APPEAR-ANCE OF DEFEAT
BUT IN TRUTH HE WON!
I CANNOT IMAGINE HOW HARD IT WAS TO PER-FORM
YES, SIR!
MATSU-MAE, A SONG!
PONG!

HE IS MODEST AND REFINED!
PONG!
PRAISE UNTO TOSHI-KANE OF OWARI!
PONG!
PONG!
HE HAS MASTERED THE SWORD AND HIMSELF
PONG!
武尚
FAN: FIGHTING SPIRIT

FOUR DAYS AFTER THE MATCH, TOSHIKANE WAS BACK IN THE DOJO, TRAINING BY HIMSELF
TOSHI-KANE, DON'T BE FOOL-ISH!
THE DOCTOR SAID YOU MUST REST FOR TWO WEEKS!
I AM GRATEFUL FOR YOUR ADVICE
BUT IT TAKES THREE DAYS TO MAKE UP FOR ONE DAY OF MISSED TRAINING
A MAN OF YOUR CALIBER WON'T LOSE HIS SKILLS BY TAKING HALF A MONTH'S REST!
INDEED, A HEAD WOUND IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER!
GO NOW, AND REST QUIETLY!


STOMP!
STOMP!
RENYA RE-TURNED TO THE DOJO
BUT THE NEXT DAY AND THE DAY AFTER THAT...
I KNOW MY OWN BODY WELL
MY LORD ...
YOU ARE A STUB-BORN FOOL!
GRR! TOSHI-KANE!
WHAT IF SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED TO YOU?!
DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS OF THE LORD WHOM YOU INSTRUCT?!
ARE YOU DIS-OBEYING AN ORDER FROM YOUR LORD?!
I DO UNDER-STAND
WHY YOU ...!
WHAM!

BRING A PAIR OF BAMBOO SWORDS!
TOSHI-KATA!
AT ONCE, LORD!
ALLOW ME TO INSTRUCT YOU
SNAP!
IT IS THEN COVERED IN A LEATHER SHEATH
A BAMBOO SWORD IS MADE BY QUARTERING A LENGTH OF BAMBOO
ZIP!
RENYA HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT STRIKING HIS LORD'S HEAD, AND SO DEVISED THIS PROTECTOR TO COVER THE HEAD AND EARS
THE OUTER COVERING MAKES IT A SAFE WEAPON THAT IS EXCELLENT FOR USE IN FREE PRACTICE
THE RIGHT HAND GRIPS THIS SECTION

TOSHI-KANE!
I AM THE SIXTH MASTER OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, AND AM KNOWN AS A FEUDAL LORD SKILLED WITH THE BLADE
BUT IT IS RUMORED AMONG SOME FEUDAL LORDS THAT MY TITLE IS AN EMPTY ONE!
BY FACING OFF AGAINST ME IN YOUR CURRENT STATE...
ARE YOU, TOO, MOCKING MY SKILLS AS A SWORDSMAN?
NO, MY LORD
YOU HAVE SKILL ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN ENTRUSTED WITH THE SECRETS OF THE STYLE
SHUFFLE
WHOOSH!
THEN YOU SHOULD REST AND HEAL!

GRAH!
WHACK!
バシン!
READING HIS OPPONENT, HE DODGES LEFT AND CUTS WITH ENOUGH POWER TO SPLIT HIM TO HIS CHEST
SLAM!
THROWING THE OPPONENT BY ENTANGLING HIS SWORD IN HIS ARMS

A POOR STRIKE STINGS THE SURFACE, BUT DOES NOT GO DEEP
A GOOD STRIKE IS NOT FELT ON THE SKIN, BUT GOES TO THE BRAIN AND THE MARROW ...
AND RATTLES WITHIN THE CHEST AND STOMACH
EVEN THOUGH HE HAS STARTED TO REEL, MITSUTOMO BOLDLY ADVANCES!
WHAM!
IF YOU HOLD BACK ON ME, I'LL KILL YOU!
LISTEN WELL!
I CANNOT HOLD BACK ...
ON ONE WHO KNOWS THE STYLE'S SECRETS

WHACK!
A STRIKE TO THE FACE!
A CUT ACROSS THE STOMACH!
A SWEEP OF THE LEGS!
A LEG LIFT!
MITSUTOMO'S LARGE FORM FLEW THREW THE AIR AGAIN AND AGAIN
A WRIST RE-VER-SAL!

PANT
HUFF
PUFF
MY LORD!
RAH!
CONTROL YOUR BREATHING!
DO NOT FORGET THE MOON ON THE WATER!
EMPTY YOUR MIND AND ATTACK!
CRACK!
ドシ!
WHAM!

A GREAT NUMBER OF TIMES...
AFTER LOSING ...
MITSUTOMO SENT HIS BAMBOO SWORD INTO RENYA'S RIBS!
CRUNCH!
HIS IN-SIDES WERE SCRAM-BLED
ドカ!
WHUMP!

THEY STEPPED BACK FROM EACH OTHER ...
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY
AND SAT
EVEN TOSHIKANE'S TOP STUDENTS RARELY LAND A HIT ON HIM
WELL DONE, MY LORD
THE LORD AND HIS SERVANT MADE THEIR WAY INTO AN INNER PARLOR WHERE THE GREAT SWORD OF NOBUTSUNA KAMIIZUMI, THE FOUNDER OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE, WAS ENSHRINED

MITSUTOMO HUMBLED HIMSELF AS A STUDENT
ONCE INSIDE...
THEY BOWED
AS FIFTH MASTER OF THE STYLE, RENYA VOWED EVEN GREATER DILIGENCE TOWARD HIS ART
MITSUTOMO REFLECTED UPON THE STROKE HE HAD LANDED UPON HIS SKILLED TEACHER AND HIS OWN PROGRESS
HE SHED TEARS OF GRAT-ITUDE

I WISH TO GO ALONE
YOUNG MASTER, I SHOULD GO WITH YOU
BUT YOUNG MASTER ...
IN NOVEMBER OF THAT YEAR, RENYA MADE A JOURNEY TO HIS HOMELAND OF OWARI
RETSUDO IS GONE, SO THERE WILL BE NO MORE SCHEMING BY THE EDO YAGYU
RENYA DECIDED HE WOULD NOT TAKE ANY LODGING ON THE WAY BACK TO OWARI

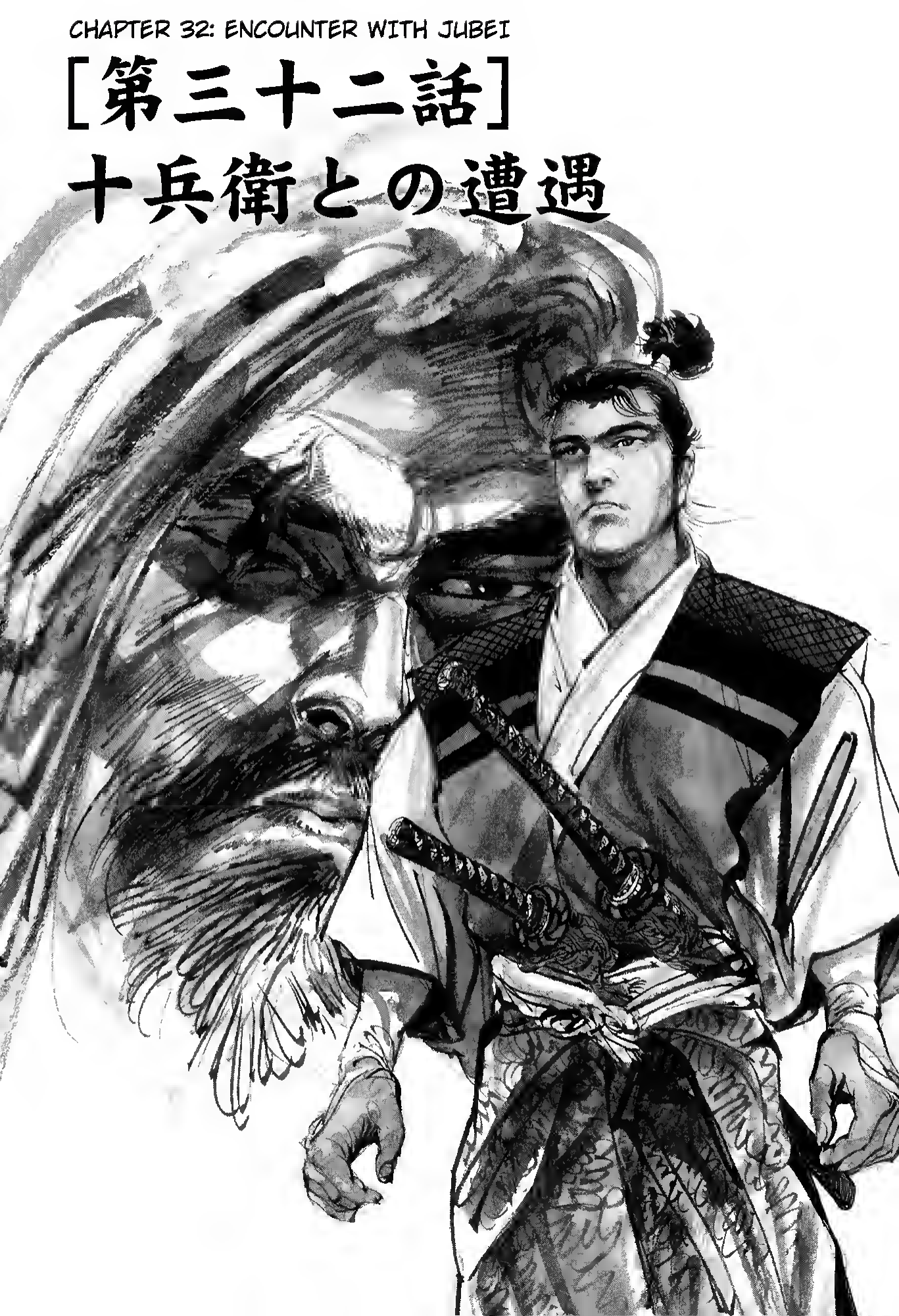
HE TRAVELED LIKE PEOPLE HAD SINCE ANCIENT TIMES
HE CARRIED ONLY WATER AND DRIED FOOD WITH HIM
OR UNDER EAVES ...
HE SLEPT IN TEMPLES ...
SOMETIMES ...
GROWL
AND EVEN NESTLED AMONG TREE ROOTS

HE MINGLED WITH THE BEASTS ...
AND TEMPERED HIS MIND, SKILL AND BODY
WHEN HE CAME ACROSS A WATERFALL
HE WOULD SPEND A HALF HOUR UNDER IT
SHOOOO...
AFTERWARD ...
HE WOULD TREAT THE SPRAY AS AN ENEMY AND WORK ON HIS ATTACK AND DEFENSE

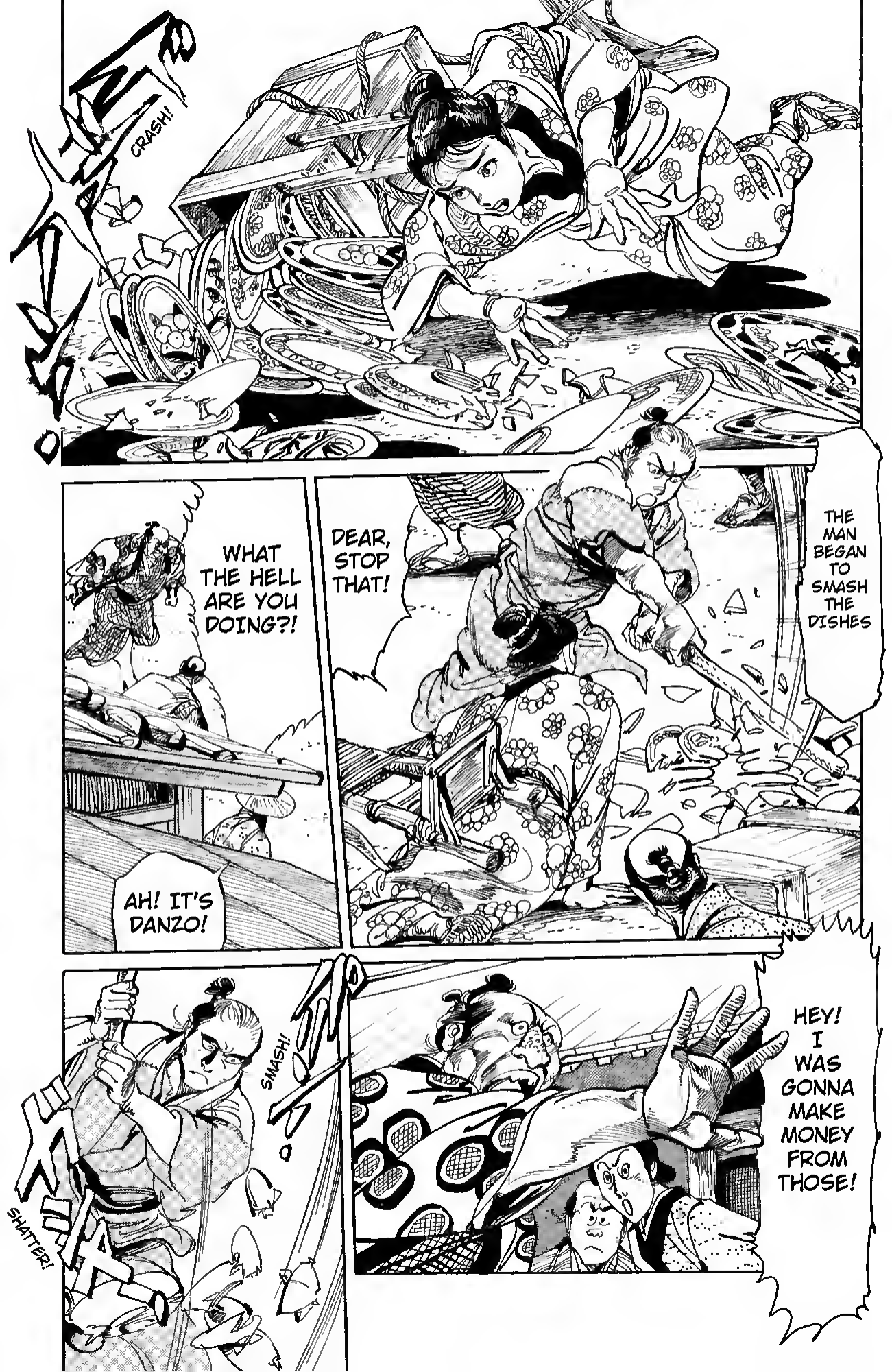
SHOOM!
AT TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS OLD...
RENYA FELT HE HAD ADVANCED TOWARD PERFECTION IN THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE

CHAPTER 32: ENCOUNTER WITH JUBEI

[第三十二話]
十兵衛との遭遇



A WOMAN WAS WALKING ALONG THE STREET
油屋
SIGN: OIL
A MAN CAME RUNNING AFTER HER
THE MAN SLAMMED A STICK INTO THE RACK ON THE WOMAN'S BACK!
WHACK!
WHACK!
THE WOMAN LOST HER BALANCE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF HER BURDEN!


CRASH!
THE MAN BEGAN TO SMASH THE DISHES
DEAR, STOP THAT!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
AH! IT'S DANZO!
HEY! I WAS GONNA MAKE MONEY FROM THOSE!
SMASH!
SHATTER!

SLIP!
YOU'VE SMASHED THEM ALL!
YOU MORON!
DEAR!
YOU IDIOT! YOU CURSED FOOL!
THOSE DISHES WERE INTEREST ON THE MONEY YOU OWE ME!
WHUMP!
WHUMP!
WHUMP!
EH?
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!

ANSWER ME!
DO YOU PLAN TO GIVE ME THE MONEY THEY OWE ME?!
I'M TELLING YOU HE'LL DIE IF YOU BEAT HIM ANY FURTHER
BUT I'M WELL-KNOWN AROUND HERE!
YOU'RE A STRANGER AROUND HERE, SO I GUESS YOU DON'T KNOW...
WHUMP!
GRAB!
YOU THINK A LOAN SHARK LIKE ME IS AFRAID OF A SAMURAI?!

WHAM!
I WON'T FORGET THIS, YOU BUMPKIN SAMURAI!
LISTEN UP, OMIKI!
IF YOU DON'T PAY UP, I'LL HAVE YOU SERVE AS A PROSTITUTE FOR A YEAR IN MISHIMA!
UGH!

DEAR!
WHUMP!
IT ISN'T BROKEN, BUT IT'S CRACKED
...
WHICH WAY IS YOUR HOME?
YOU CAN RIDE HOME ON MY BACK
...
HOLD THIS FOR ME

YOU REALLY ARE A FOOL, DEAR
WE PAID BACK THE PRINCIPAL A LONG TIME AGO
BUT THE INTEREST KEEPS MAKING MORE INTEREST!
HE'S NOT RIGHT IN THE HEAD
MY HUSBAND ...
HE SAID HE'D TAKE THOSE DISHES IN EXCHANGE, SO WHY DID YOU SMASH THEM?
THEY LOOKED LIKE FINE, WELL-CRAFTED DISHES TO ME
I WON'T SIGN AND SELL A DISH THAT I AM NOT SATISFIED WITH
THOSE DISHES WERE FINE ENOUGH TO SELL
HE'S GOTTEN TOO EXACTING ABOUT THEM LATELY!

OH WELL
THE COLOR AND TEXTURE WERE COMPLETELY WRONG
THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH THE CLAY AND THE WAY I FIRED THEM
THIS IS OUR PLACE
HOW ABOUT SOME HOT TEA?
!
SHOOF

RENYA STOPPED DEAD WHEN HE SAW THE FIREWOOD PILED UP OUTSIDE
IS SOME-THING THE MATTER?
NO ...
HERE'S YOUR TEA
IT'LL HEAL IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS
PUT MEDI-CINE ON IT EVERY DAY
IF I USE THIS CLAY...

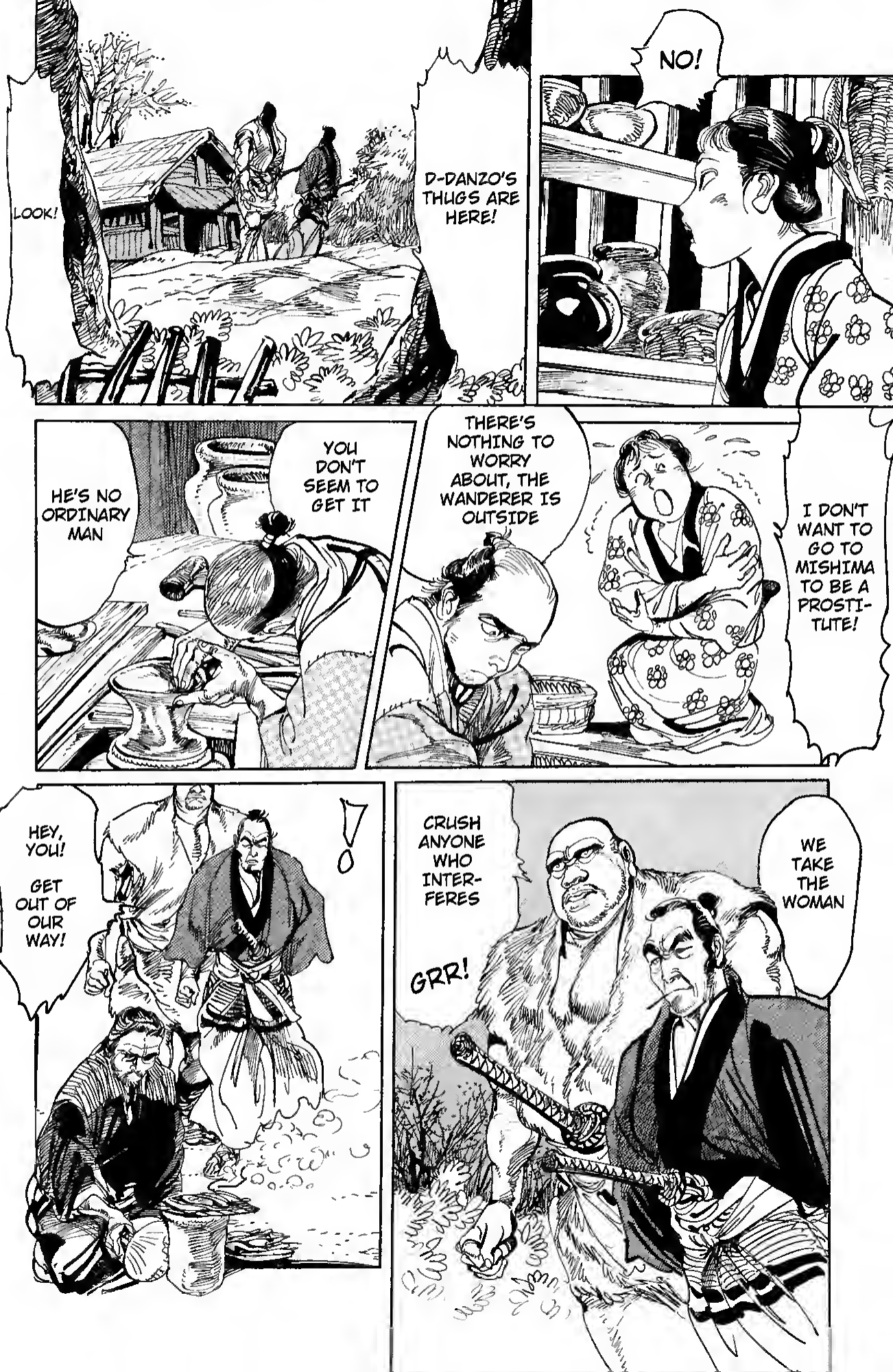
I HAVE TO CHANGE THE WAY I KNEAD DEPENDING ON THE CLAY
THIS MAN'S GONE TO THE TROUBLE OF TENDING YOUR LEG AND YOU DON'T EVEN THANK HIM!
BUT THIS CLAY ...
THERE'S TEA FOR YOU TOO, DEAR
AND THE PILE OUT-SIDE ...
BY THE WAY, THE WOOD YOU'VE GOT HERE ...
NOW, NOW
YOU NINCOM-POOP!
HE'S STAYING IN OUR SHED
A VAGRANT CAME WANDER-ING IN A COUPLE MONTHS AGO
A WAN-DER-ER?
OH, THAT?
SOME NAMELESS WANDERER CUT THAT FOR US
DOES THE SHAPE OF WOOD MATTER WHEN FIRING POTTERY?

IT WAS NOT DONE WITH A SAW OR HATCHET
IT WAS AS THOUGH THEY WERE SPLIT WITHOUT EVEN BEING TOUCHED
WAS FLAWLESSLY QUARTERED AT PERFECT RIGHT ANGLES
EACH PIECE OF FIRE-WOOD ...
BUT IF MY GUESS IS RIGHT...
WELL, HE LIKES TO MEANDER ABOUT, AND SOMETIMES DOESN'T COME BACK FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS
WHERE IS THIS WANDERER NOW?
A POWERFUL SENSE OF MARTIAL SKILL IN THE WAY THE WOOD WAS CUT
RENYA FELT ...
HE'LL BE AT THE RIVER ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL
A FINE FISHERMAN, HE IS

A MAN IN ROUGH CLOTHES STOOD BY THE RIVER
BUT SEEING HIS LEATHER FOOT-WEAR ...
RENYA KNEW HE WAS NO SIMPLE VAGRANT
WHISH!
EACH TIME HE THRUST THE LENGTH OF BAMBOO HE HELD INTO THE WATER, IT ALWAYS PASSED INTO THE GILLS AND OUT THE MOUTH OF A FISH
A DEFT SWING OF THE BAM-BOO ...
AND THE FISH WOULD FLY INTO A BASKET AS THOUGH BEING SUCKED IN
WHOA!

MASTER JUBEI!
YOU'RE MASTER YAGYU JUBEI!
SHICHIROBEI OF THE OWARI YAGYU
HMM ...
SHI-CHI-RO-BEI ...
I MIGHT'VE HEARD THAT NAME... SOMEWHERE...
IT'S ME, UNCLE!
SHICHI-ROBEI!

AHH, SHI-CHI-RO-BEI ...
YES, I'M GOING WHERE MY FEET CARRY ME AND I GUESS THAT'S KEPT ME ALIVE
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE
IT BRINGS BACK MEMO-RIES
SO YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?
THAT'S NICE
IF SAMURAI KNOW OUR WANDERER, I GUESS HE ISN'T JUST A BEGGAR AFTER ALL


LOOK!
D-DANZO'S THUGS ARE HERE!
NO!
HE'S NO ORDINARY MAN
YOU DON'T SEEM TO GET IT
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT, THE WANDERER IS OUTSIDE
I DON'T WANT TO GO TO MISHIMA TO BE A PROSTITUTE!
HEY, YOU!
GET OUT OF OUR WAY!
!?
CRUSH ANYONE WHO INTERFERES
GRR!
WE TAKE THE WOMAN

I CAN HEAR YOU FINE, BUT YOU SEE I'M COOKING AT THE MOMENT, SO...
YOU DEAF?!
HEY!
GRR!
JUST AS THE THUG'S PALM REACHED JUBEI'S NECK ...
WHY YOU!
JUBEI MOVED HIS SHOULDERS A BIT
AND THE THUG WENT FLYING!
WHAM!

GRR!
CHOMP!
HOMPH!
HOMPH!
HERE
TRY SOME TROUT
IT'S TASTY
CHOMP
YOU'LL BURN YOUR LIPS IF YOU DON'T OPEN WIDE
AND FOR YOU, TOO
HAHOH!

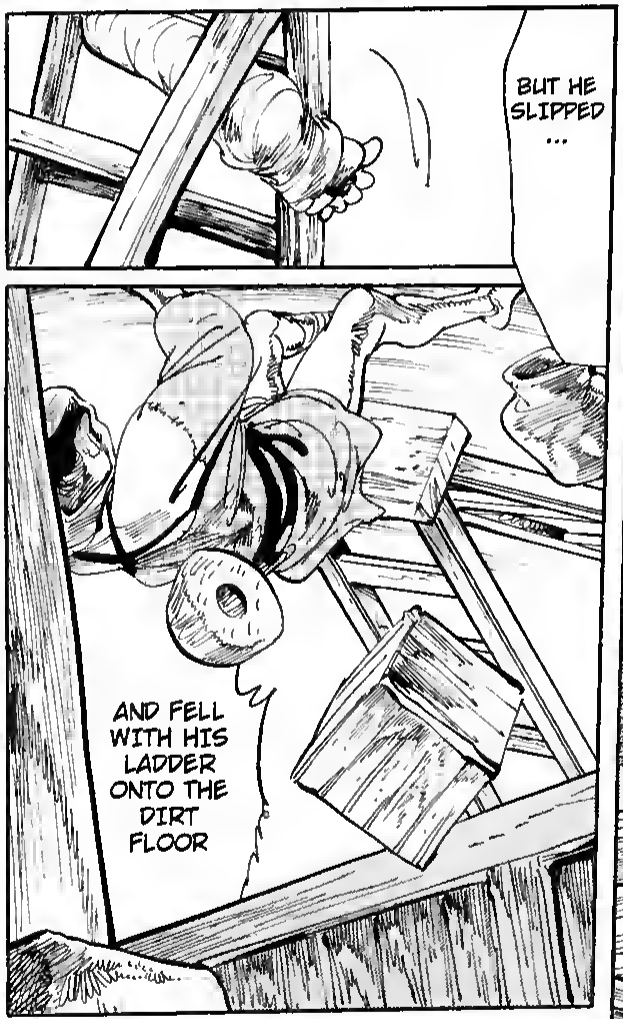
HOMPH
HOMPH
GOOD TROUT, THOUGH
MMM ...
THANK YOU, TROUT
HUH? THAT MAN RAN OFF SOMEWHERE
WHY ARE WE EATING FISH?
UH ...?
YEAH
LET'S GO
MAKES YOU WANT TO GO GIVE THAT LOAN SHARK A GOOD KICK
THIS FEELS WRONG
?
JUBEI STILLED HIS OWN PRESENCE AND CAUGHT THE MAN IN AN ILLUSION
IT LOOKS LIKE THE BIG ONE COULDN'T SEE JUBEI FOR SOME REASON

AND YET THOSE TWO THUGS LEFT
THE WANDERER DIDN'T DO A THING ...
CLINK!
WELL, WAND-ERER ...
AND STAY WITH US
PLEASE EAT YOUR FILL ...
AND YOU, TOO SAMURAI
YOU ARE BOTH STRANGE, BUT WELCOME FOLK TO ME
WE HAVE PLENTY OF GRAIN AND VEGETABLES
IN THE SHED ...
THEY LEFT WITH PEACEFUL FACES
THEIR ANGER HAD VANISHED

BUT THE NATURE I SPEAK OF IS DIFFERENT FROM THE NATURE OF ZEN TEACHINGS
YOU CANNOT STAND AGAINST NATURE
I SIMPLY LET THINGS BE
WHAT WAS THAT?
SO TELL ME ...
I SEE ALL OF THEM AS AN ENEMY BLADE THAT COULD COME AT ME AT ANY TIME
THE FIVE ELEMENTS, WIND, AIR, EARTH, WATER AND FIRE...
YOU ARE COMPLETELY UNFETTERED
I HAVE FREED MYSELF
HA HA HA
THINKING LIKE THAT WOULD DRIVE AN ORDINARY MAN MAD
SO I HAVE CLEANSED MYSELF OF DESIRE
EVERY-THING IS AN ENEMY ...

THE NEXT DAY ...

MAY BE THE BIGGEST TRAP OF THEM ALL
BUT HOLDING SUCH FREEDOM IN A BODY THAT WAS BORN TO A WARRIOR HOUSE...
...


BUT HE SLIPPED ...
AND FELL WITH HIS LADDER ONTO THE DIRT FLOOR

THE POTTER TOOK A CRUTCH AND BEGAN CHECKING ALL HIS TOOLS

HE CAUGHT THE POTTER'S HEAD
JUBEI SAW THIS ...
WHOOSH!
AND DOVE FOR HIM!
I'VE NEVER SEEN SOMEONE MOVE SIDE-WAYS THAT QUICKLY
IT IS NOT MY FEET MOVING QUICKLY. BUT RATHER MY FEET MOVING TO MATCH MY CENTER OF GRAVITY
EIGHT YEARS AGO...
YOU PROMISED TO FACE ME IN A MATCH
I ASK THAT YOU KEEP THAT PROMISE
...
WHUMP!

IRON-RIBBED FAN
ATTACK ME WHENEVER YOU PLEASE
NO MATTER WHERE RENYA CAME FROM ...
JUBEI HAD NO OPENINGS
THAT HE SIMPLY DIDN'T HAVE
AND IN ORDER TO ATTACK, RENYA WOULD NEED A DEGREE OF HATRED OR OTHER EMOTION ...
JUBEI WOULD INSTANTLY DODGE ...
AND THEN MOVE TO COUNTER

ZZZ
ZZZ
EVEN ...
WHEN HE WAS SOUNDLY SLEEPING
LIKE A COMPLETE MIRROR, JUBEI'S FORM TOOK ALL OF RENYA'S INTENT ...
AND REFLECTED IT RIGHT BACK AT HIM
THAT NIGHT, HE BEGGED JUBEI FOR A PROPER MATCH
COME TO THE RIVER IN THE MORNING
THE NEXT DAY WAS THE SAME
NO MATTER HOW MUCH WILL HE WILLED HIMSELF, RENYA STILL COULD NOT STRIKE

FROM THE MOMENT WE MET ...
I KNEW THAT YOU WOULD WANT A MATCH WITH ME
PERHAPS IT IS THE TRAP OF BEING BORN TO A HOUSE OF WARRIORS
I'LL GRANT YOUR WISH!
COME!

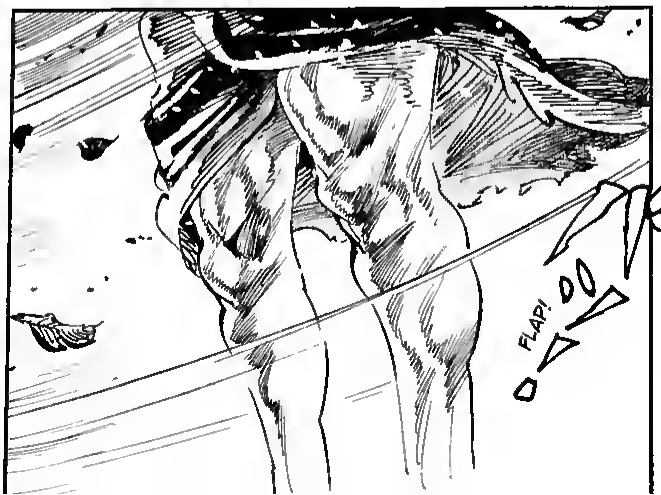
SHINK
FACE ME!
BOTH FIGHTERS ...
HRAH!

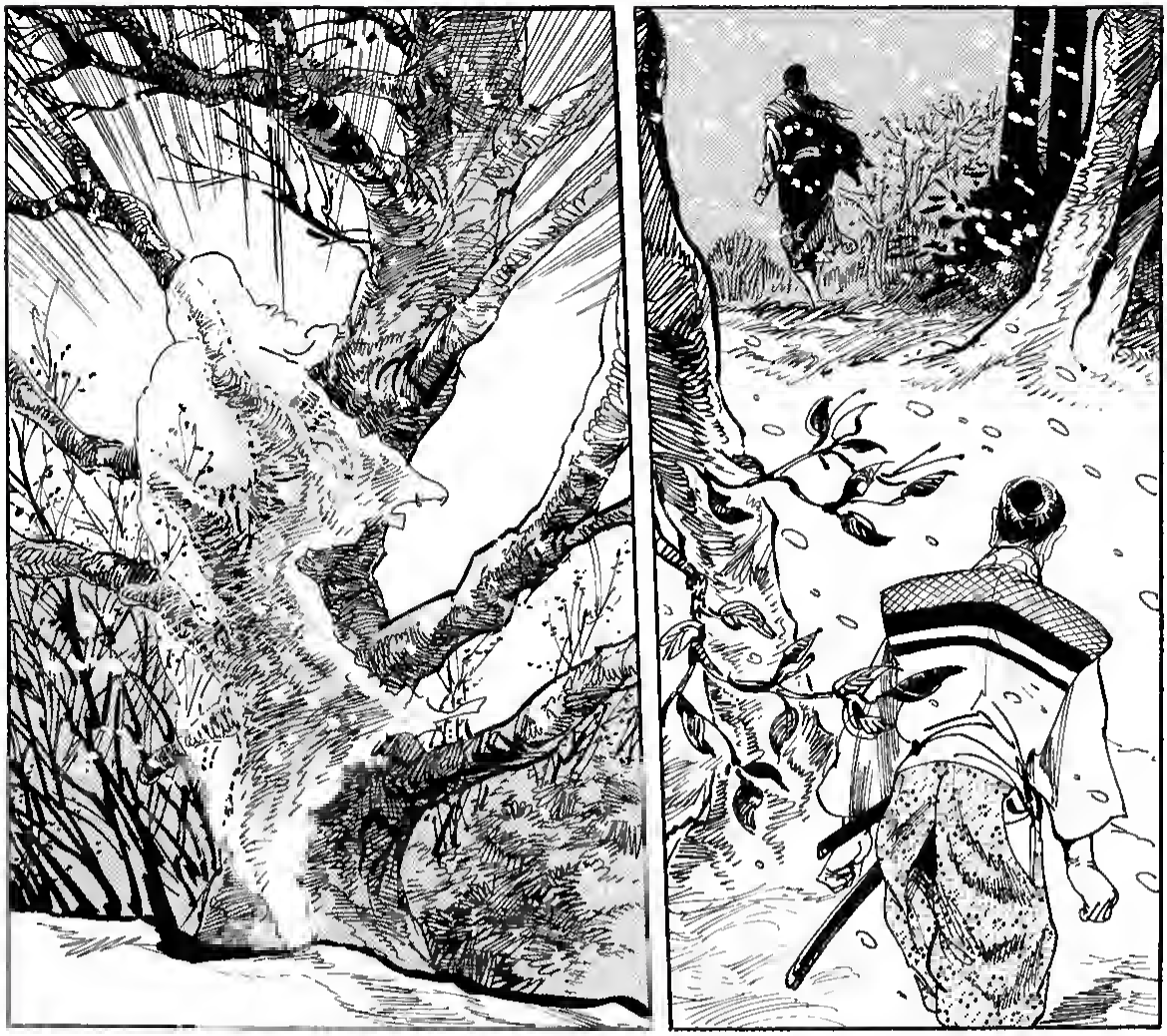
AND GLIDED RAPIDLY TOWARD EACH OTHER!
ASSUMED THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE FORMLESS LOW STANCE ...
WHOOSH!

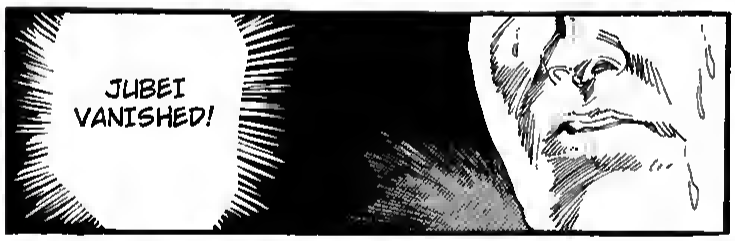
NO ...
YOU CUT OFF MY RIGHT HAND FIRST
YOU CUT INTO MY RIGHT FOREARM THERE
WELL DONE, SHICHI-ROBEI ...
NO ...
THEN WE'LL CALL IT A DRAW
AND IF YOU WISHED, YOU COULD TAKE HAVE TAKEN MY HEAD WITH YOUR SECOND STROKE
IF YOU HAD A HEALTHY RIGHT EYE...
YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I THAT I PUT EVERYTHING INTO THE FACT THAT YOUR ARE BLIND IN YOUR RIGHT EYE

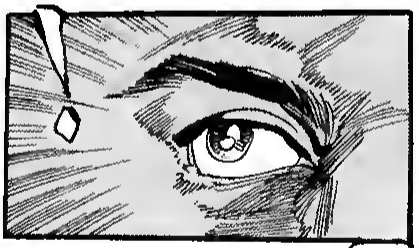
JUBEI!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

POSSESSED BY MY BLADE, I FOLLOW THE PATH THAT IS NATURAL FOR ME
A MURDEROUS CREATURE LIKE ME MUSTN'T HAVE A HOME
THANK THE POTTERS FOR ME


FLAP!




JUBEI VANISHED!



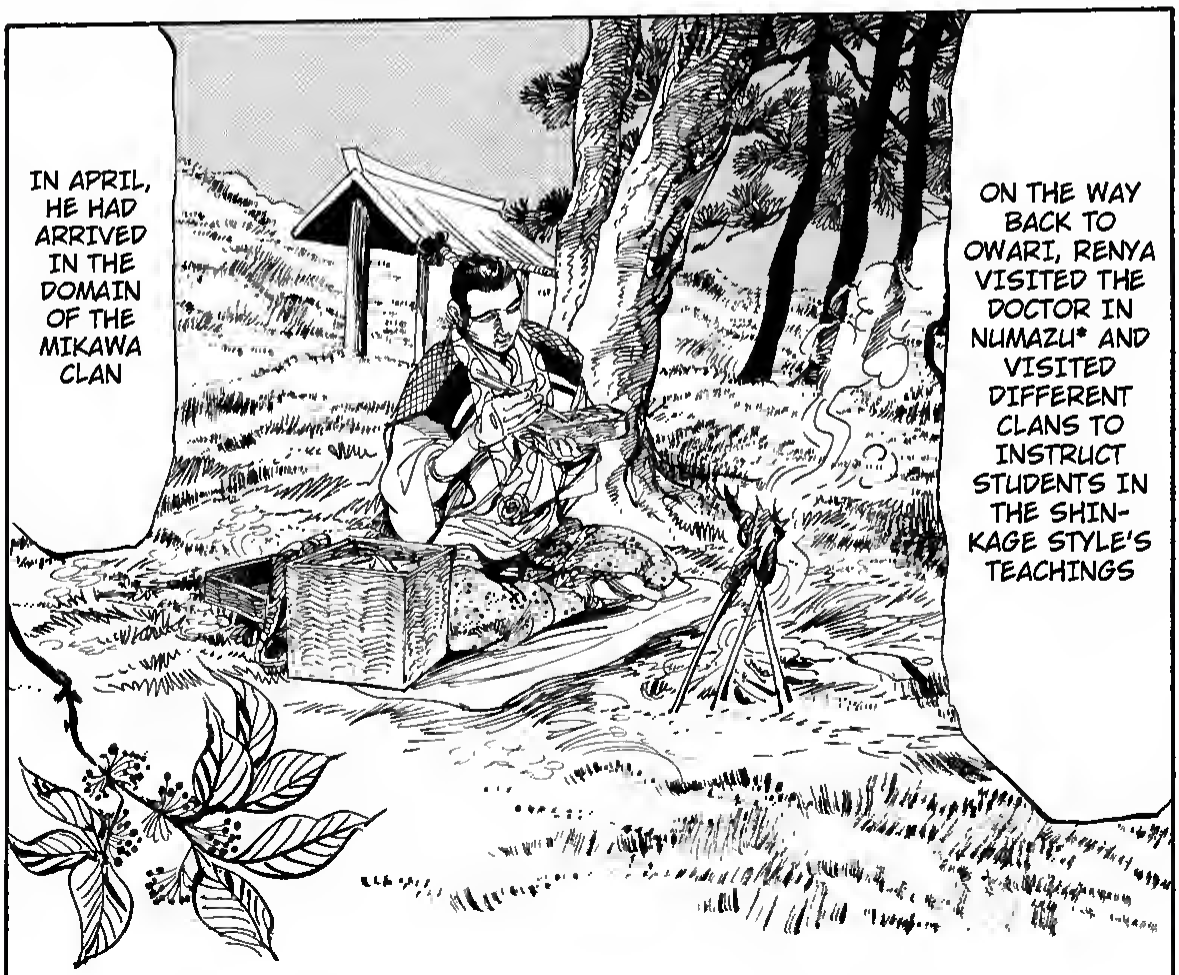
MELTING INTO THE NATURAL WORLD
IN AN IN-STANT HE WAS GONE ...

VANISHING IN FRONT OF OTHERS IS ENOUGH AS IT IS, BUT VANISHING IN FRONT OF ME...!
INCRE-DIBLE
CHILLED AND DEEPLY IMPRESSED BY THE DEPTH OF MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING...
HE HAS GONE SO FAR ...
RENYA COULD ONLY STAND STUNNED

● CHAPTER 32 - FIN ●

【第三十三話】慕情

CHAPTER 33: LONGING


IN APRIL, HE HAD ARRIVED IN THE DOMAIN OF THE MIKAWA CLAN
ON THE WAY BACK TO OWARI, RENYA VISITED THE DOCTOR IN NUMAZU* AND VISITED DIFFERENT CLANS TO INSTRUCT STUDENTS IN THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S TEACHINGS

*SEE VOLUME 4, CHAPTER 29

THERE WAS AN EARTH-QUAKE
ズ・ド・ド・ド・
RUMBLE
RUN!
THE HOUSES ARE FALLING!
AAH!
RENYA HEARD PEOPLE CLAMORING FROM THE HIGHWAY, BUT THE NUMBER OF HOUSES DESTROYED SEEMED FEW
A MAN CAME TOWARD HIM WHO LOOKED LIKE HE HAD HAD A STROKE
HE RAN LIKE DEATH WAS BEHIND HIM
WHAT'S WRONG?!
PARALYZED ON THE RIGHT SIDE

WHUMP!
A HOUSE HAS COLLAPSED!
I'VE NO NEED FOR A SAMURAI!
WHOOSH!
RENYA WENT OVER THE HILL
IT'S THIS WAY, RIGHT?
ONLY THE ATTACHED BARN HAD FALLEN
THE MAIN HOUSE WAS INTACT

A GIRL WAS TRAPPED AMONG THE RUBBLE, HER LEGS AND TORSO CAUGHT BETWEEN PILLARS
OVER HERE
IS SOMEONE IN HERE? WHERE ARE YOU?
I'M FINE!
MANA, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
THANK YOU
EASY DOES IT
MY FOOT IS JUST SCRATCHED UP A BIT

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
IF OUR BARN HAS FALLEN, THEN THAT MEANS THERE WILL BE A LOT OF FALLEN HOUSES IN THE YAMABE VILLAGE!
YOU FOOL GIRL! THERE COULD BE AFTERSHOCKS! DON'T GO RUNNING INTO DANGER!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY SHE HASN'T FOUND A HUSBAND!
FOOL GIRL!
COUGH
ARE YOU SICK?
I'M SURE I DON'T HAVE MUCH LIFE LEFT IN ME
A DOCTOR IN NUMAZU GAVE ME A VARIETY OF MEDICINES
HE SAID THAT THIS IS GOOD FOR A COUGH
YAMABE VILLAGE IS THAT WAY, IS IT?

NOW WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
HER FOOT IS HURT
AND I DON'T THINK DISIN-FECTING IT WITH ALCOHOL WILL BE QUITE ENOUGH
THE DAMAGE IN THE VILLAGE OF YAMABE WAS EXTENSIVE AND MANA WAS WORKING HARD TO HELP
THE FIRST PRIORITY IS PUTTING OUT THE FIRES!
THE SECOND IS RESCUE!
THE THIRD ...
IS GATHERING THE INJURED!
HEAVE! HEAVE!
MY LEG ...

NEED SOMETHING?
TAKE THE WOUNDED TO MY HOUSE!
IS IT ALL RIGHT IF I TAKE WHAT WE NEED?
I'VE BROUGHT THE BEST MEDICINE FOR YOUR FOOT
YOU DID?
HOLD ON, PLEASE!
AS RENYA BEGAN TO ASSIST, MANA HALTED HIM
ZENBEI! HERE'S SOME MORE MEDICINE!
THIS WILL BE HELPFUL

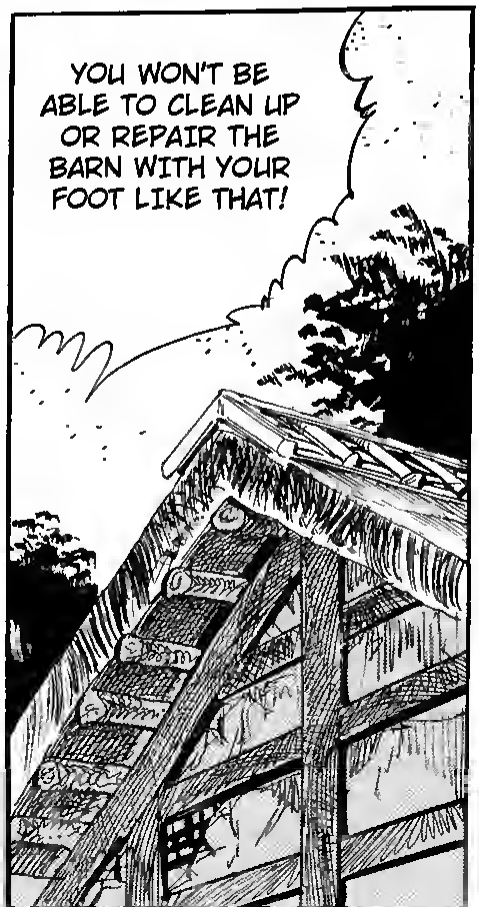
RENYA REMOVED HIS SWORDS AND HIS TROUSERS
FARMERS AND FISHER-MEN HAVE NO LOVE FOR SAMURAI!
WE NEED A FEW PEOPLE OVER THERE NOW!
MANA! I HEARD A VOICE FROM THAT RUINED HOUSE OVER THERE!
UNDER HERE!

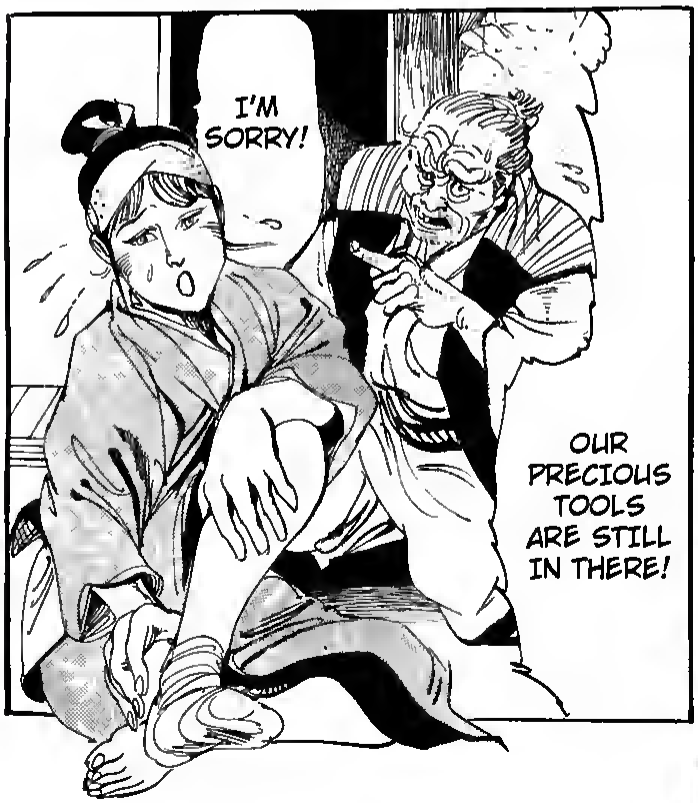
ZENBEI WAS THE HEIR OF THE VILLAGE HEADMAN
BATHE AND REFRESH YOUR-SELVES!
ALL RIGHT! ANYONE WHO IS INJURED OR TENDED THE WOUNDED, COME INSIDE
BUT ...
RENYA WAS TOLD THAT THE MEN WERE BATHING
SHOOF
THERE WAS SOME SORT OF MIXUP
HERE IS A CHANGE OF CLOTHES, COURTESY OF THE HEADMAN!
IT'S YOUR TURN TO BATHE!
OW! OW! OW!

SLAM!
ドシャ!
...
I'M T-TERRIBLY SORRY
KEEP BRINGING MORE CLOTHES TO WASH!
YOU'RE GOOD AT THIS!
ONCE CLEAN, MANA WAS INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL

I AM JUST PASSING THROUGH
YOU SEEM TO KNOW MANA, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE WE HAVE MET
I THOUGHT MAYBE I COULD LENT A BIT OF A HAND
ZENBEI LOOKED AT RENYA WITH A SILENT INVITA-TION
THE SUN HAS ALREADY GONE DOWN
I INVITE YOU TO EAT HERE WITH EVERYONE AND THEN STAY HERE FOR THE NIGHT
YOU HAVE VERY HONEST EYES
CLEAR TO THE CORE

RENYA LEFT THE HEADMAN'S HOUSE AFTER LUNCH THE NEXT DAY
BUT MANA SOON FOUND HERSELF UNABLE TO WALK ANY FURTHER
OW!
THE WOUND IS INFLAMED
I SHOULD'VE DONE AS YOU TOLD ME
OUCH!
THANK YOU

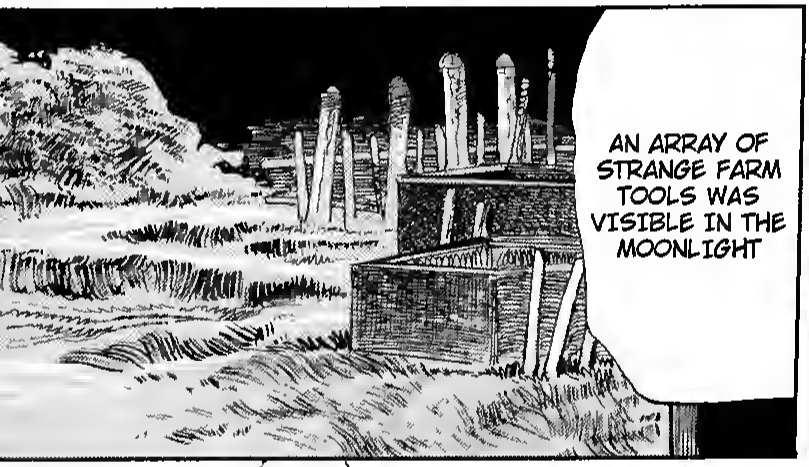

YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO CLEAN UP OR REPAIR THE BARN WITH YOUR FOOT LIKE THAT!

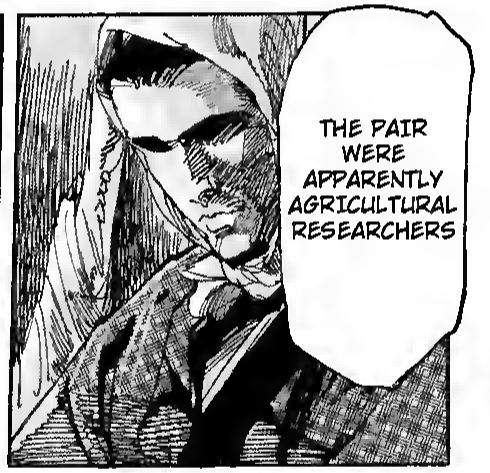

I'M SORRY!
OUR PRECIOUS TOOLS ARE STILL IN THERE!

GLARE!
LET ME REBUILD THE BARN FOR YOU
AND HOW IS A SAMURAI GOING TO HELP THINGS?!
WHEN I WAS A BOY...
I ONCE HELPED IN BUILDING A NEW HOUSE TO LIVE IN
I DON'T WANT TO BE IN DEBT TO A SAM-URAI!
I CARRY MY OWN FOOD, AND I'M USED TO SLEEPING OUTDOORS
LET ME SLEEP UNDER YOUR EAVES AND WE'LL CALL IT EVEN
...

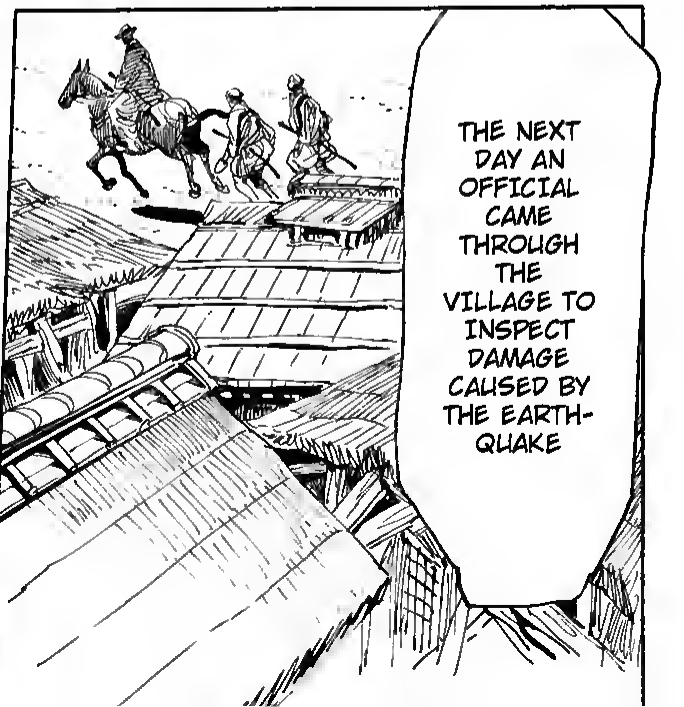
CLATTER
WHY IS IT ...
I AM IN NO HURRY AND ONLY WANT TO BETTER MYSELF BY FOLLOWING YOUR DAUGHTER'S EXAMPLE
YOU WANT TO HELP SO MUCH?
AT NIGHT, AS RENYA SAT UNDER THE EAVES, HE HEARD THE SOUND OF CHARCOAL BEING GRINDED DOWN FOR INK
BY GRAFTING EGGPLANT SPROUTS TO PUMPKIN VINES ...
THE RESULT WILL RESIST BLIGHT AND THE HEAT OF THE SUMMER SUN ...
AND GROW UNTIL LATE AUTUMN

RIGHT
FIRST OFF, YOU MUST REMOVE ALL SPIKED LEAVES AROUND THE ROOTS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
BEFORE THAT WE WILL NEED TO EXPLAIN TRIPLE BRANCHING
MIX FISH OR SEAWEED INTO THE EARTH AND--
COUGH *COUGH*


AN ARRAY OF STRANGE FARM TOOLS WAS VISIBLE IN THE MOONLIGHT


THE PAIR WERE APPARENTLY AGRICULTURAL RESEARCHERS

SHOOF!
THAT PEASANT ...
?
HAS THIS HOME BEEN DAM-AGED BY THE EARTH-QUAKE?
DAMAGE INSPECT-ORS HERE!


THE NEXT DAY AN OFFICIAL CAME THROUGH THE VILLAGE TO INSPECT DAMAGE CAUSED BY THE EARTH-QUAKE

COUGH
COUGH
AS YOU CAN SEE, ONLY THE BARN WAS DAMAGED
THERE SHOULD ONLY BE TWO LIVING HERE ...
THAT MAN ...
HE CAME YES-TER-DAY ...
SOUNDS SUSPI-CIOUS! BRING HIM IN!
YES, SIR!
COME HERE!
WHAT IS YOUR NAME?
...
TELL ME YOUR NAME AND BIRTH-PLACE!
HA! YOU'RE A CRIM-INAL, AREN'T YOU?!
WHOOSH!
AH!
MASTER!
MA-

I AM A STUDENT OF ONE OF YOUR STUDENTS!
YOUR NAME IS OSAWA, IS IT NOT?
YES, THAT'S ME!
WHY WOULD THE SWORD INSTRUCTOR TO THE OWARI CLAN BE IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?!
MEN SHOULD STICK TO FARMING, FISHING AND CRAFTING!
HMPH! A SWORDSMAN, EH?
THE OFFICIAL LEFT AND RENYA WENT BACK TO WORK
THE NEXT DAY, OSAWA RETURNED WITH COLLEAGUES, BEARING LUMBER AND OTHER SUPPLIES
WHAT GOOD DO SAMURAI DO?

PLEASE ALLOW US TO ASSIST YOU, MASTER
WELL, I SUPPOSE YOU CAN HELP ME SET UP THE FRAME
IN JUST TWO DAYS, THE FRAME-WORK WAS BUILT UNDER RENYA'S WATCHFUL EYE
TAKE CARE, MASTER
MY THANKS TO YOU ALL
THE NEXT DAY, RENYA STARTED LAYING DOWN THE ROOF
HERE, HAVE SOME FOOD
AFTER A FEW DAYS, THE SWELLING IN MANA'S FOOT WENT DOWN AND SHE BEGAN TO HELP
...

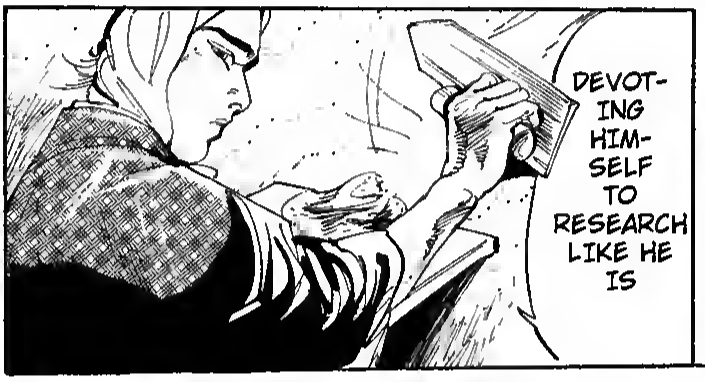
YOU WOULD RATHER SPEND YOUR DAYS LIKE THIS THAN GO HOME TO YOUR WIFE AND CHILDREN?
I HAVE NO WIFE OR CHILDREN
OH?
WHY NOT?
WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I WANT TO CONCENTRATE ON MY RESEARCH
YOU SEEM TO BE WRITING A BOOK ON AGRICULTURE
THE LOCAL VILLAGES HAVE TALKED ABOUT PUTTING MONEY TOGETHER TO PUBLISH IT ONCE IT'S DONE
I BELIEVE THAT FARMING KNOWLEDGE SHOULDN'T BE LEFT TO ONE'S OWN CHILDREN OR VILLAGE ALONE, BUT SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE LAND
FATHER ...
HHHSSSS

FATHER ...
I WON'T HAVE A SAMURAI SLEEPING UNDER MY ROOF
WE HAVE TWO EMPTY ROOMS IN THE HOUSE, WHY NOT LET HIM STAY?
I'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH SAMURAI!
ENOUGH!
WHY ARE YOU SO CAUGHT UP IN YOUR OWN PAST?!
I DON'T THINK IT'S RIGHT TO JUDGE THEM ALL
OUR FAMILY USED TO SQUEEZE FARMERS FOR EVERYTHING THEY HAD

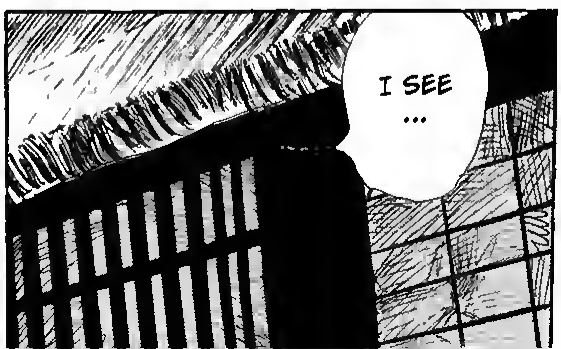
THEY COULD HAVE BEEN BAD SEEDLINGS
HALF OF THEM WENT BACK LAST YEAR
HMM
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE IMPROVED CARROT CROP?!
FA-THER!
NEXT! ABOUT THE KON-NYAKU POTATOES ...
THEN THAT'S YOUR NEXT POINT OF RESEARCH
I'M SORRY ...
THANKS AS ALWAYS
I BROUGHT YOU SOME LUNCH!

I THINK IT'S ADMIRABLE ...
BUT IT SEEMS SOME PART OF HIM CAN'T ESCAPE BEING A SAMURAI!

WE WERE A SAMURAI FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS, BUT MY FATHER GAVE UP THAT LIFE
HE'S BEEN TRYING TO SPEND HIS LIFE FARMING


DEVOTING HIMSELF TO RESEARCH LIKE HE IS

IT'LL BE FINISHED TOMORROW
I'LL LEAVE ONCE IT'S DONE


I SEE ...

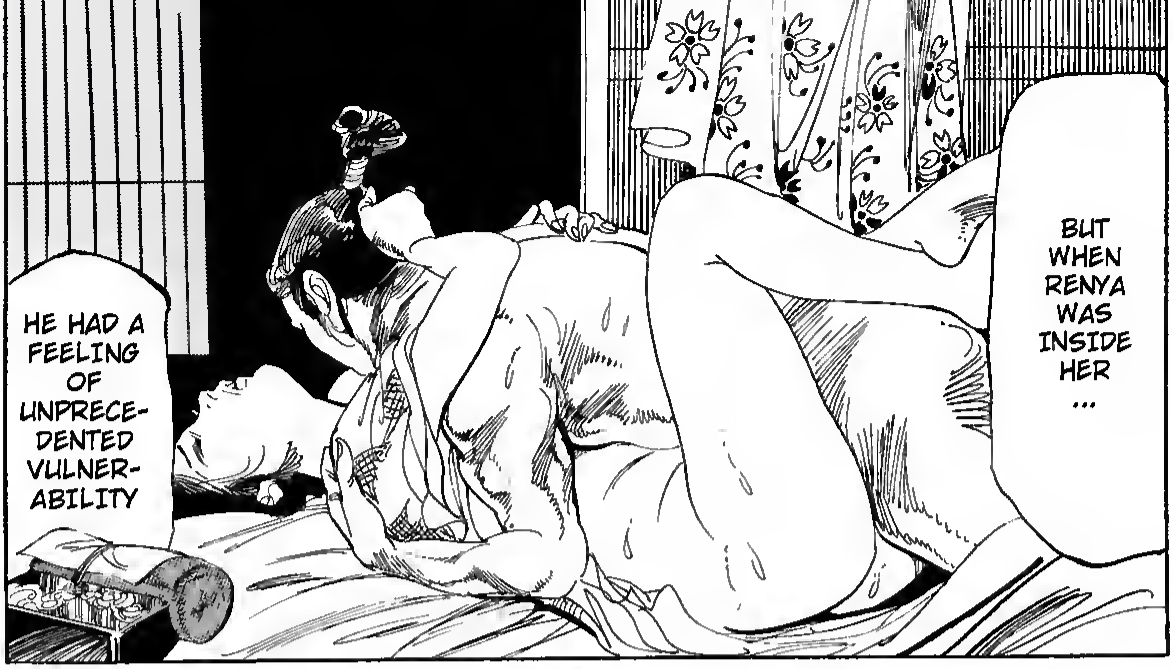
IT'S ALL ...
AND NOW WE HAVE A NICE, STURDY BARN, UNLIKE BEFORE!
HYUP!
PART OF MY TRAINING

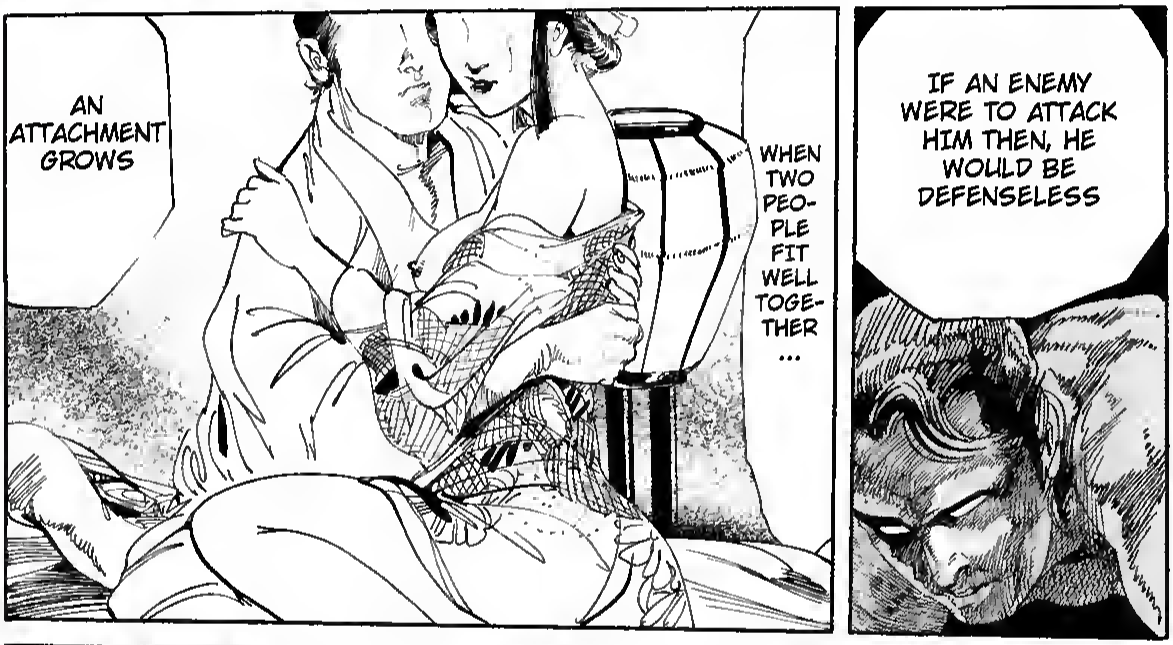
IT'LL BE DONE TOMORROW, EH?
THE NEXT EVENING MANA PREPARED A LAVISH MEAL
BUT WHEN SHE TOOK IT OUT ...
RENYA WAS GONE
TOSHI-KANE YAGYU* ...

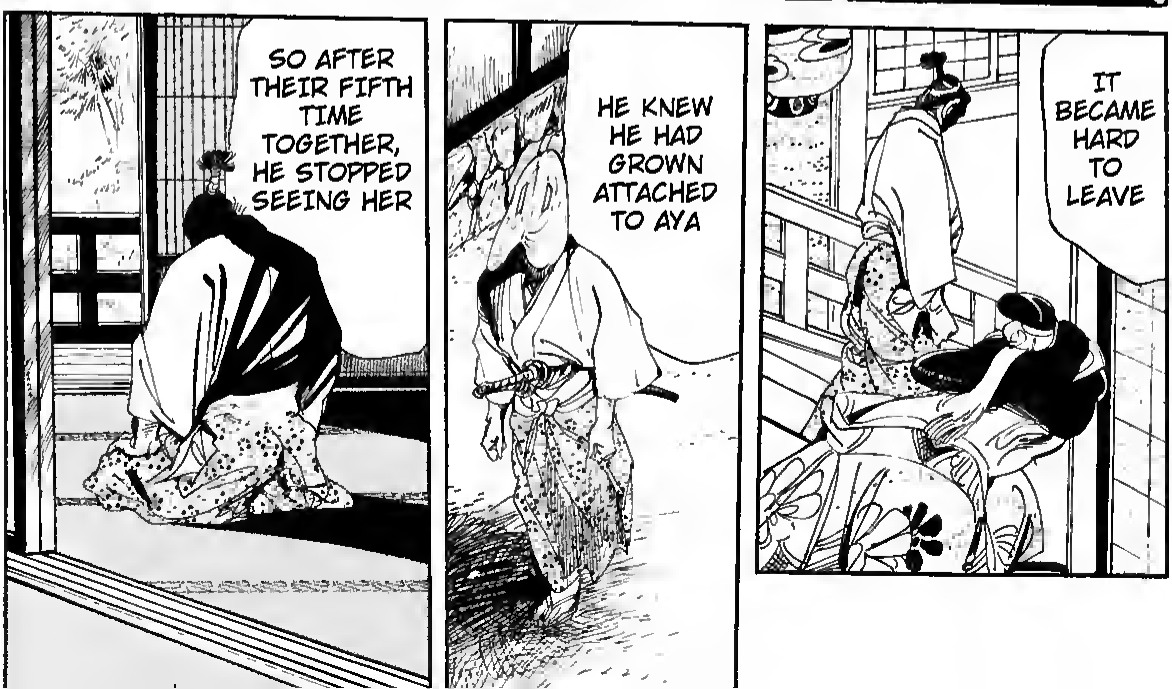
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENYASAI YAGYU

A FEW DAYS AFTER RENYA RETURNED TO OWARI ...
HIS MOTHER WAS COMPLAINING
WHILE YOU WERE GONE, TOSHIKANE ...
YOU RECEIVED FOUR MARRIAGE PROPOSALS
ONE WAS FROM HISAE ...
YOU KNOW HER
SHE'S LORD NOTO'S DAUGHTER
OH ...
SHE'S GOT BRAINS AS WELL AS LOOKS, AND SHE'S GENTLE
SHE WOULD MAKE ...
A PERFECT MATCH FOR YOU
OH ...
CLICK!
CLATTER

YOU NEVER LISTEN WHEN THE SUBJECT TURNS TO MARRIAGE
IT'S NOT THAT YOU DON'T LIKE GIRLS, IS IT?!
ONCE, WHEN HE WAS NINETEEN, RENYA WENT TO YOSHI-WARA, EDO'S RED LIGHT DISTRICT
WELL, YOUNG MASTER ...
IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT YOU GET AN INVITATION FROM A COURTESAN!
HER NAME WAS AYA AND SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A RONIN
RENYA COUPLED WITH AYA
AND KNEW THE JOY OF A WOMAN'S BODY


HE HAD A FEELING OF UNPRECE-DENTED VULNER-ABILITY
BUT WHEN RENYA WAS INSIDE HER ...


AN ATTACHMENT GROWS
WHEN TWO PEO-PLE FIT WELL TOGE-THER ...
IF AN ENEMY WERE TO ATTACK HIM THEN, HE WOULD BE DEFENSELESS


SO AFTER THEIR FIFTH TIME TOGETHER, HE STOPPED SEEING HER
HE KNEW HE HAD GROWN ATTACHED TO AYA
IT BECAME HARD TO LEAVE

RENYA SPRANG FROM HIS BED!
WHOOSH!
DEEP ONE NIGHT IN JULY ...
BUZZZZ
BUZZZZ

ONE DAY ...
YOUNG MASTER ...
AND HAD SPILLED HIS SEED
HE WAS HAVING A DREAM OF COUPLING WITH MANA ...

CHARACTER: REVOLVE
YOU REFUSED A MARRIAGE PROPOSAL WITH THE DAUGHTER OF THE ESTEEMED LORD OISHI?
YOUR POOR MOTHER IS SO UPSET!

YOU'RE ALREADY THIRTY!
ONCE YOU'RE KNOWN AS THE MOST SKILLED SWORDSMAN IN THE LAND ...
PLEASE CONSIDER FINDING A WIFE!
GEN-PACHI ...
I MET MASTER JUBEI LAST YEAR
MASTER JUBEI YAGYU?
BUT I HEARD HE WAS DEAD!
PERFECTLY EMPTY ...
MASTER JUBEI IS UTTERLY FREE ...
HIS SWORDS-MANSHIP IS ON A WHOLE DIFFERENT PLANE

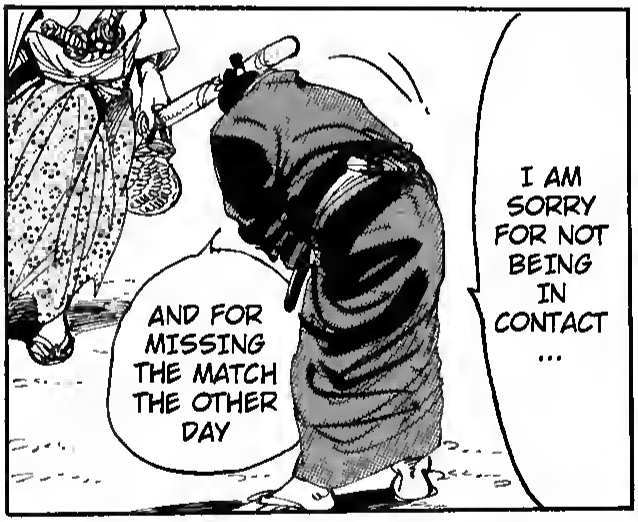
WHISH!
HE COMPLETELY CRUSHED ME, THE HEAD OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE

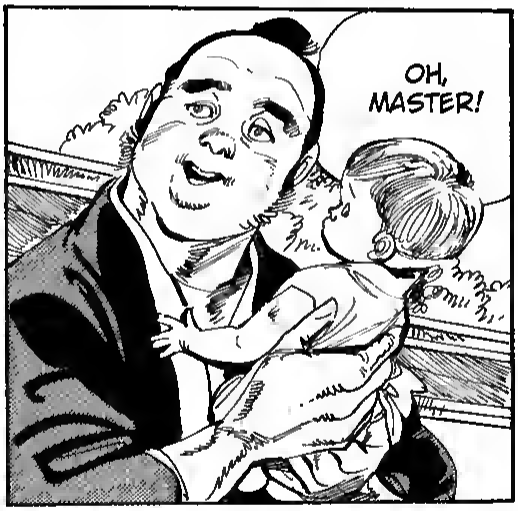
「最終話」求道（ぐどう）は止まず

FINAL CHAPTER:
THE ENDLESS ROAD

THERE IS A MAN FAR BEYOND ME, THE FIFTH MASTER OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE: THE SINGULAR SWORDSMAN JUBEI YAGYU WANDERING UTTERLY FREE

COOCHIE COOCHIE COO!

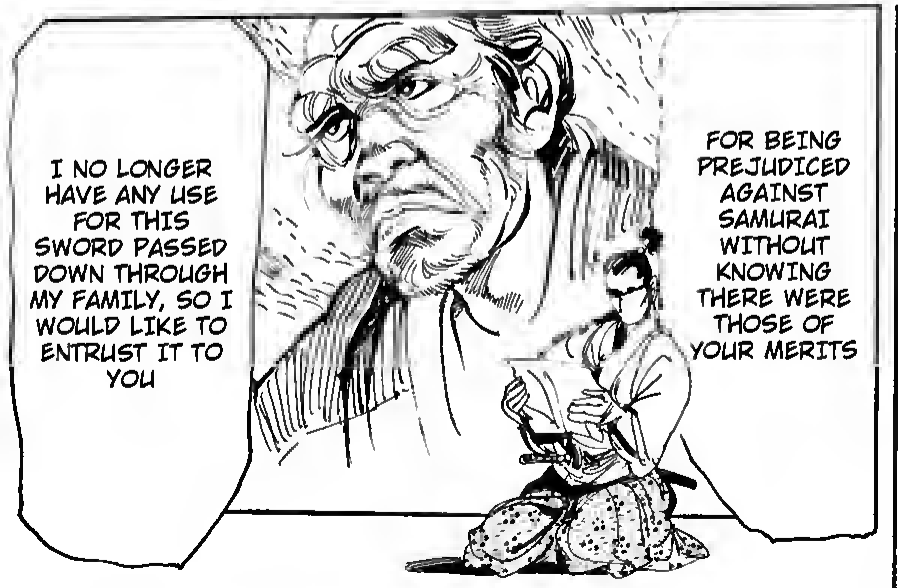

I AM SORRY FOR NOT BEING IN CONTACT ...
AND FOR MISSING THE MATCH THE OTHER DAY


OH, MASTER!

I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT
THIS LITTLE ONE HAD A FEVER THAT DAY
WE SAW A DOCTOR AND IT TURNED OUT TO BE PNEUMONIA

SHE LOOKS JUST LIKE YOU
ISN'T SHE?!
SHE'S VERY CUTE
OTSURU
BUT NOW SHE'S JUST FINE
LOOK, IT'S MY MASTER!
SHE'S THE APPLE OF MY EYE!
NO, NO!
NOT CUTE ENOUGH FOR YOU?
PRAYING THAT HER NOSE WILL LOOK LIKE MY WIFE'S
ACTUALLY, I HAVE BEEN TO THE ISE SHRINE TEN TIMES ...
HE'S STUDYING AS WE SPEAK!
THIS ONE'S BIG BROTHER IS TRYING TO GET INTO A CLAN SCHOOL NEXT YEAR, YOU SEE
YOU SEEM TO BE STAYING BUSY
AH, MY WIFE'S CALLING
WHERE ARE YOU, DEAR?!

ALL RIGHT, SHINSUKE! LET'S MOVE ON TO THE NEXT CHARACTER!
AU-GUST ...
A COURIER FROM KAKEGAWA BROUGHT A PACKAGE
FROM MANA ASAKURA
IT'S FROM MANA ...
REN-YA UN-TIED THE PACK-AGE ...
INSIDE WERE A SHORT SWORD AND A LETTER
ON JUNE 10, MY FATHER SEZAEMON ...
FELL TO DISEASE


I NO LONGER HAVE ANY USE FOR THIS SWORD PASSED DOWN THROUGH MY FAMILY, SO I WOULD LIKE TO ENTRUST IT TO YOU
FOR BEING PREJUDICED AGAINST SAMURAI WITHOUT KNOWING THERE WERE THOSE OF YOUR MERITS

其の、貴殿の如き武士を見聞したる

I WOULD LIKE TO APOLOGIZE...

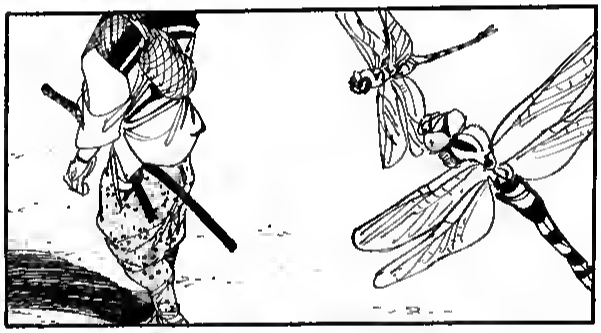
HE HAD WRITTEN IT WITH HIS LEFT HAND AS HE HAD LOST THE USE OF HIS RIGHT HAND BECAUSE OF A STROKE

MANA ...
FORGET THESE LAST WORDS AS THE JEST OF A FOOLISH OLD MAN
SINCE YOU LEFT, MANA HAS OFTEN STOOD GAZING IN THE DIRECTION OF OWARI
TOSHI-KANE* ...
WHO IS SHE?
THAT SWORD IS TOO FINE FOR AN ORDINARY SAMURAI, BUT IT WAS SENT BY A WOMAN
...
WHEN I WAS IN KAKE-GAWA
WE MET ...
YOUR RELATION TO HER MUST BE SOMETHING SPECIAL
*TOSHIKANE YAGYU WOULD BECOME RENNASAI YAGYU

SINGLE
...
MARRIED OR SINGLE?
YOUNG
WAS SHE OLD OR YOUNG?
HO HO HO
SO YOU ALREADY HAD A GIRL YOU LIKED!
JUST AS I THOUGHT!
SLAP
I'M YOUR MOTHER!
I KNEW IT WAS ABOUT THAT WOMAN!
TOSHI-KANE!
YOU'VE BEEN MOPING AROUND FOR DAYS!
DON'T JUMP TO CONCLU-SIONS
MOTHER ...
THAT'S WHY YOU TURNED DOWN ALL THOSE PROPOSALS!

AND DRAG HER BACK HERE MYSELF!
IF YOU WON'T GET OFF OF YOUR BOTTOM, THEN I WILL GO TO KAKE-GAWA ...

IF YOU ASKED YOUR LORD, HE WOULD GRANT A REQUEST FOR MARRIAGE, NO MATTER WHAT CLASS OR COUNTRY SHE COMES FROM!
PLEASE MAKE HER YOUR WIFE!
BRING HER HOME!



I HEARD HE WAS GOING TO VISIT A STUDENT FROM THE ISETSU CLAN
OTOYO, DO YOU KNOW WHERE TOSHI-KANE WAS HEADED?!

WHEN RENYA STROLLED OUT FROM OWARI
THE HEADS OF RICE WERE A DAZZLING GOLD ...

HE'S FOUND A WIFE?!
OH?!
WRONG! I HAVE A FEELING HE'S VISITING HIS FUTURE WIFE IN KAKEGAWA!
OH!
A CUTE LITTLE GRAND-CHILD!
I'M SO HAPPY FOR YOU!
THINK OF IT, OTOYO!
NEXT YEAR I'LL BE HOLDING MY GRANDCHILD IN THESE ARMS!
!

I HAVE COME ...
TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO YOUR FATHER
SHAKING WITH DELIGHT, MANA SIMPLY KEPT WORKING HER SICKLE
RENYA PUT DOWN HIS SWORDS, REMOVED HIS OUTER CLOTHES ...
AND BEGAN TO BUNDLE RICE STALKS
A FARMING SAMURAI?
ZHUGE LIANG'S SOLDIERS HARVESTED CROPS DURING THE BATTLE OF WUZHANG PLAINS
THAT EVENING ...

AS RENYA SAT IN A BED IN A BACK ROOM, HE REALIZED THE JOY MANA'S VOICE BROUGHT HIM
MANA TOLD RENYA HOW GRATEFUL HER FATHER WAS FOR THE BARN HE HAD BUILT
YOUR FAMILY'S SWORD
THIS IS...
WHO SHOULD HAVE INHERI-TED IT?
ISN'T IT YOU ...
WHEN MY FATHER WAS YOUNG ...

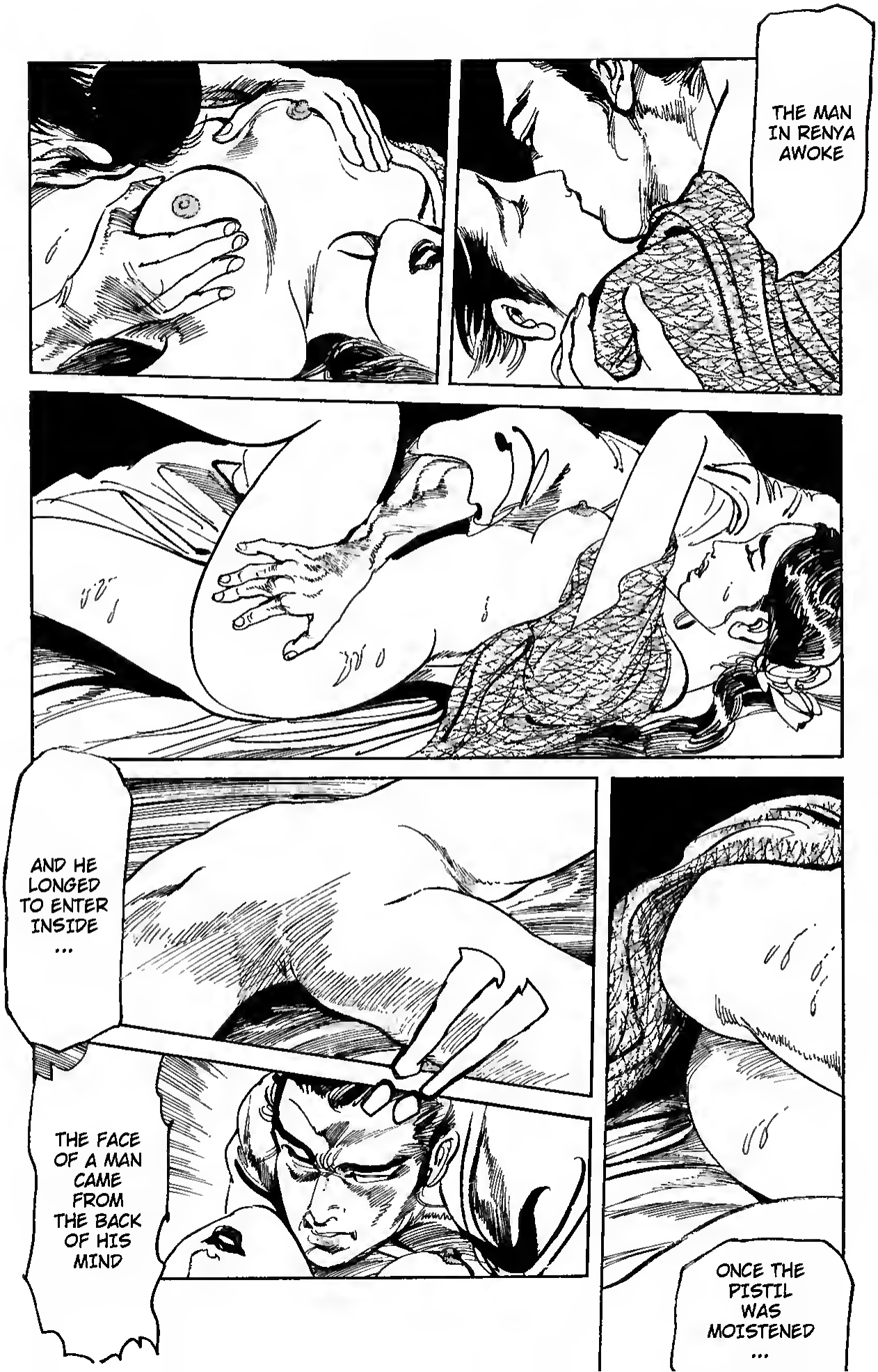
I TOOK UP THE TORCH MY FATHER LEFT, AND WANT TO CONTINUE IMPROVING FARMING METHODS, SO I DON'T NEED THE SWORD
THOUGH I'M NOT SURE HE WANTED IT FOR ME...
HE STOPPED BEING A WARRIOR AND TRAVELED THE LAND, LEARNING THE BEST AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES FROM DIFFERENT FARMERS
THE GRAFTS AND USING ASH AS FERTI-LIZER WORKED!
IT'S A BREAK-THROUGH!
BUT THE ROW IS AVERAGING THIRTY PER PLANT, SO IT IS BOUND TO KEEP MAKING MORE!
SEE? THIS PLANT HAS PRODUCED TWENTY EGGPLANTS
THUMP THUMP
SNIP!
THE SERVANTS WORK IT
IT IS NOT LARGE, BUT I HAVE SOME FIELDS AT MY ESTATE IN OWARI
...

HEY!
CAW!!
CAW!!
FLAP!
FLAP!
THE WARRIOR CLASS HAS ITS MANNERS AND CUSTOMS
IF ONE WAS TO HAVE A WIVE DEVOTED TO FARMING RESEARCH ...
IT MIGHT REFLECT POORLY ON HIM
YOU ARE A FARMING RESEARCHER ...
YOU KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF LEAVING SEEDS ...
FOR THE NEXT GENE-RATION
BUT FOR THAT TO HAPPEN, THE STAMEN MUST POLLINATE THE PISTIL ...
OR FRUIT WON'T GROW

TONIGHT, I WILL GO TO COLLECT SOME POLLEN
THE TRUTH IS, I WAS THINKING OF GOING TO OWARI
SO MY FATHER HAD TO RAISE ME ALONE
MY MOTHER DIED GIVING BIRTH TO ME
WITHOUT A FATHER?
HOW WILL YOU RAISE A CHILD ...

I'M JUST A WILD-FLOWER IN A FIELD
MY POOR, CLUMSY DAD
POLLEN IS ALL I NEED
HERE ALL ALONE
HOW CAN I LEAVE HER ...

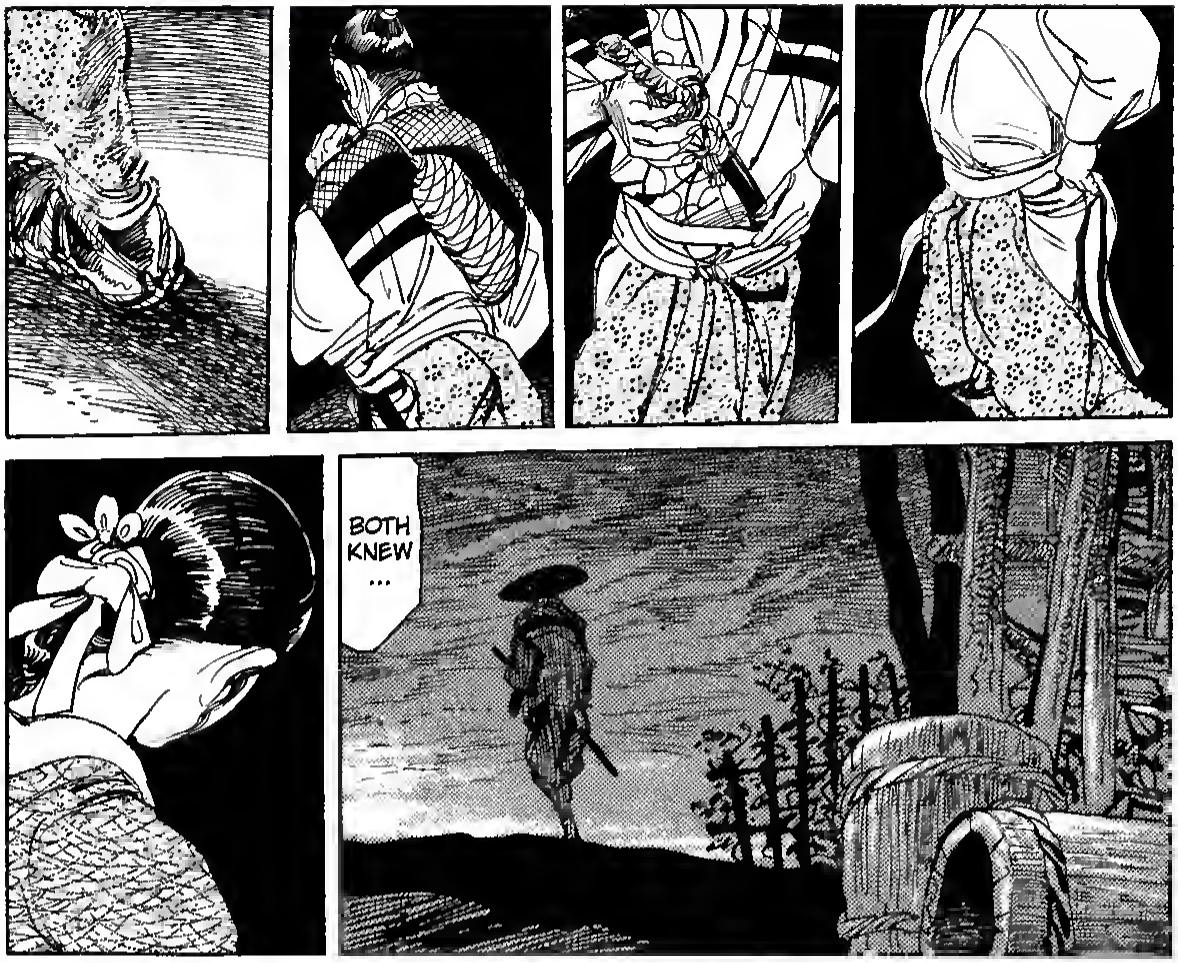
A FEMININE SCENT FILLED THE ROOM
MINA SLIPPED INTO RENYA'S BED ...
AND BURIED HER FACE IN HIS CHEST
AND HER NIGHT-CLOTHES WERE RUMPLED AS SHE CLUNG TO HIM
HER SOFT SKIN BLUSHED FAINTLY

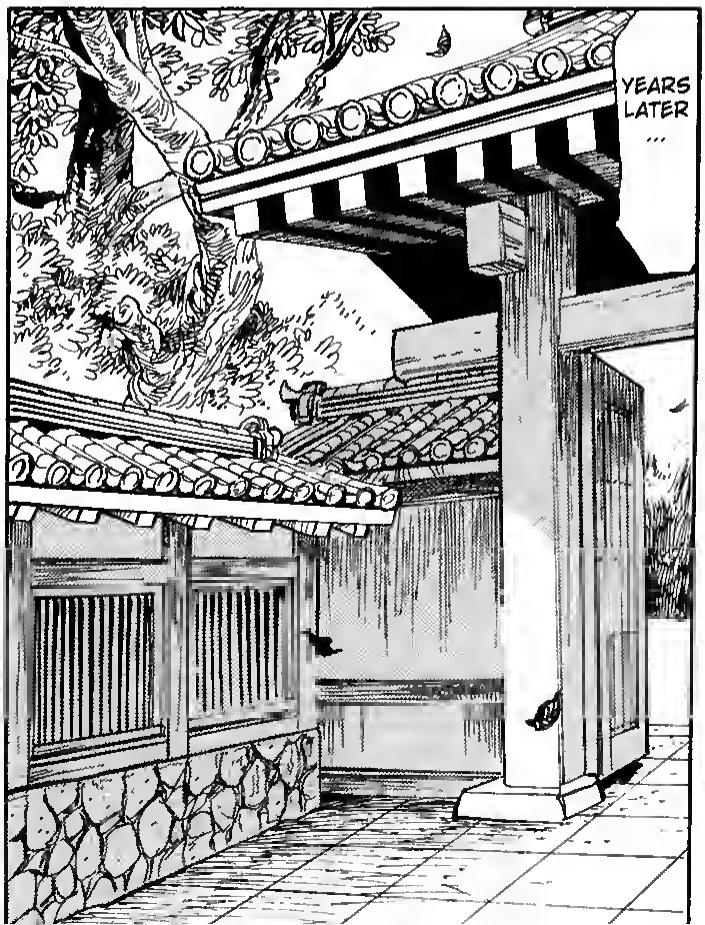

THE MAN IN RENYA AWOKE
AND HE LONGED TO ENTER INSIDE ...
THE FACE OF A MAN CAME FROM THE BACK OF HIS MIND
ONCE THE PISTIL WAS MOISTENED ...

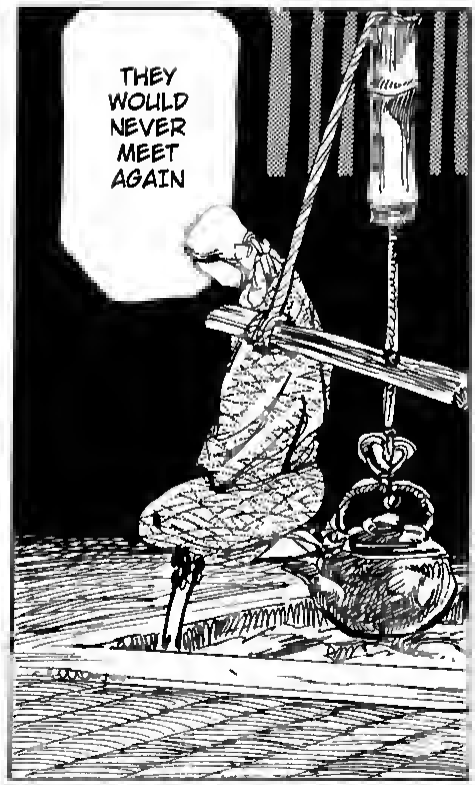
HE UNTIRINGLY DEVOTED HIMSELF TO TRAINING ...
THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF LONELI-NESS ...
IT WAS JUBEI YAGYU
BOOOOM!

DASH!
SHOOF!
SLAM!

SLUMP
WHAT'S WRONG?
WHY?
IT IS A TRAP FOR ME
IF I DO NOT FREE MYSELF FROM ALL TRAPS, I CANNOT ACHIEVE WHAT I DESIRE


BOTH KNEW ...


YEARS LATER ...


THEY WOULD NEVER MEET AGAIN

AND SO RENYA ADOPTED HIM AS THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE'S SUCCESSOR
THE SON OF RENYA'S OLDER BROTHER TOSHIKATA PROVED TO BE HIGHLY SKILLED WITH THE SWORD ...
BY THAT TIME, RENYA'S MOTHER HAD GIVEN UP ON HIM MARRY-ING ...
SO SHE FOCUSED ON TEACHING TANKA POETRY TO PEOPLE IN THE NEIGH-BORHOOD
WITH HIS POSITION AS SWORD INSTRUCTOR NO LONGER HOLDING HIM BACK...
RENYA WAS COM-PLETELY FREE TO TRAIN AS HE WISHED

IT WAS ALSO AROUND THIS TIME ...
HE HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE HE COULD BEGIN TO SIMPLY EXIST RATHER THAN HAVING TO ACT
BY THE DAUGHTER OF A RONIN IN KAKE-GAWA
IT WAS PENNED ...
THIS BOOK ON AGRICULTURE ...
IS REALLY QUITE SOMETHING
THAT HE HEARD NEWS ABOUT MANA FROM THE HEADMAN OF A NEARBY VILLAGE

AND THOUGH SHE IS NOW HIS WIFE AND THEY HAVE CHILDREN TOGETHER, SHE STILL DEVOTES HERSELF TO HER RESEARCH
THE SON OF THE HEADMAN OF A NEARBY VILLAGE HAD BEEN IN LOVE WITH HER FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS...
THEY ARE A HAPPY COUPLE
TWELVE YEARS LATER ...
RENYA IMAGINED WHAT HER LIFE WAS LIKE
HYAAAH!

HRAH!
オオーッ

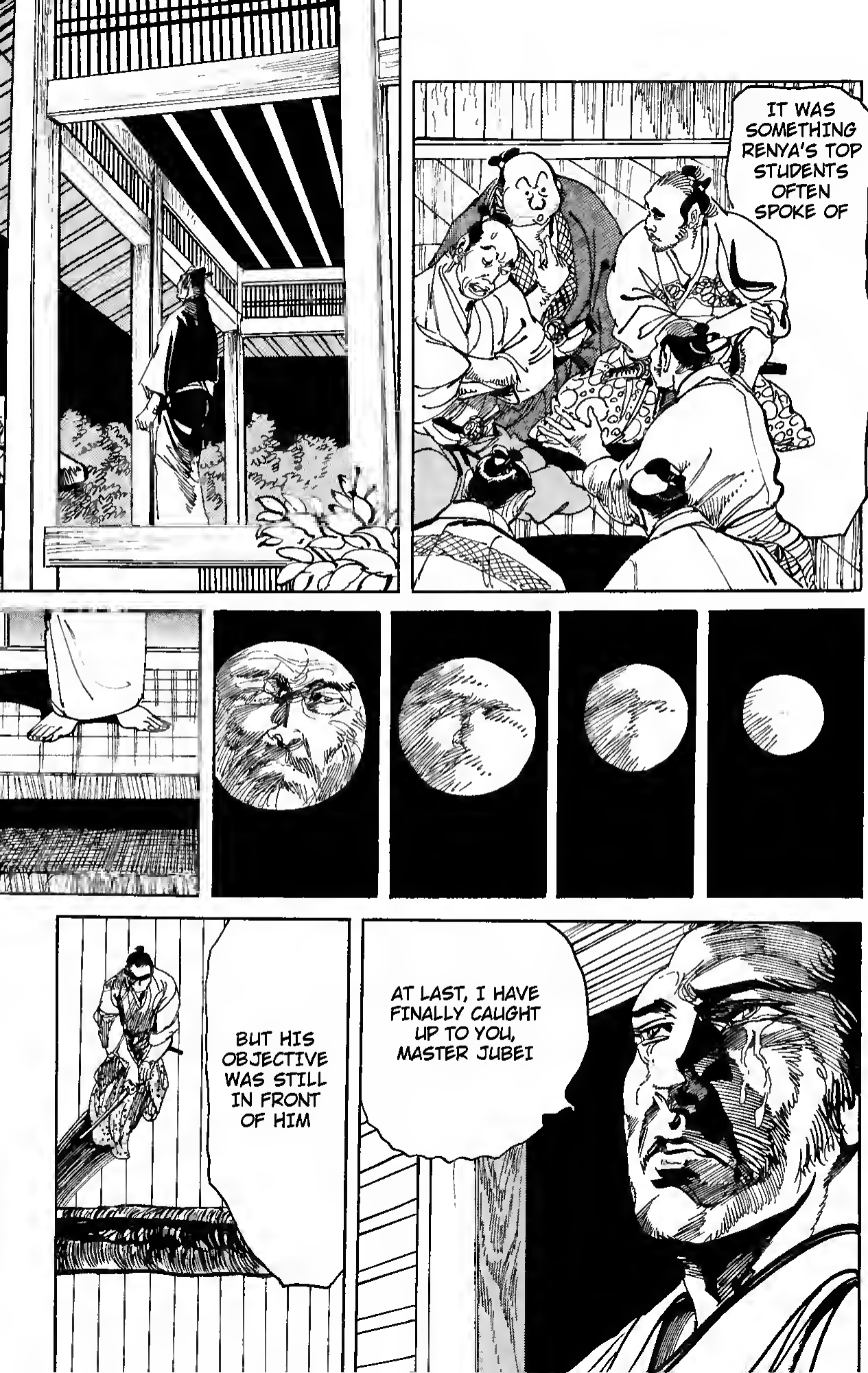
TOSHI-
NOBU
...
WHAT'S
WRONG?

?!
HUH?

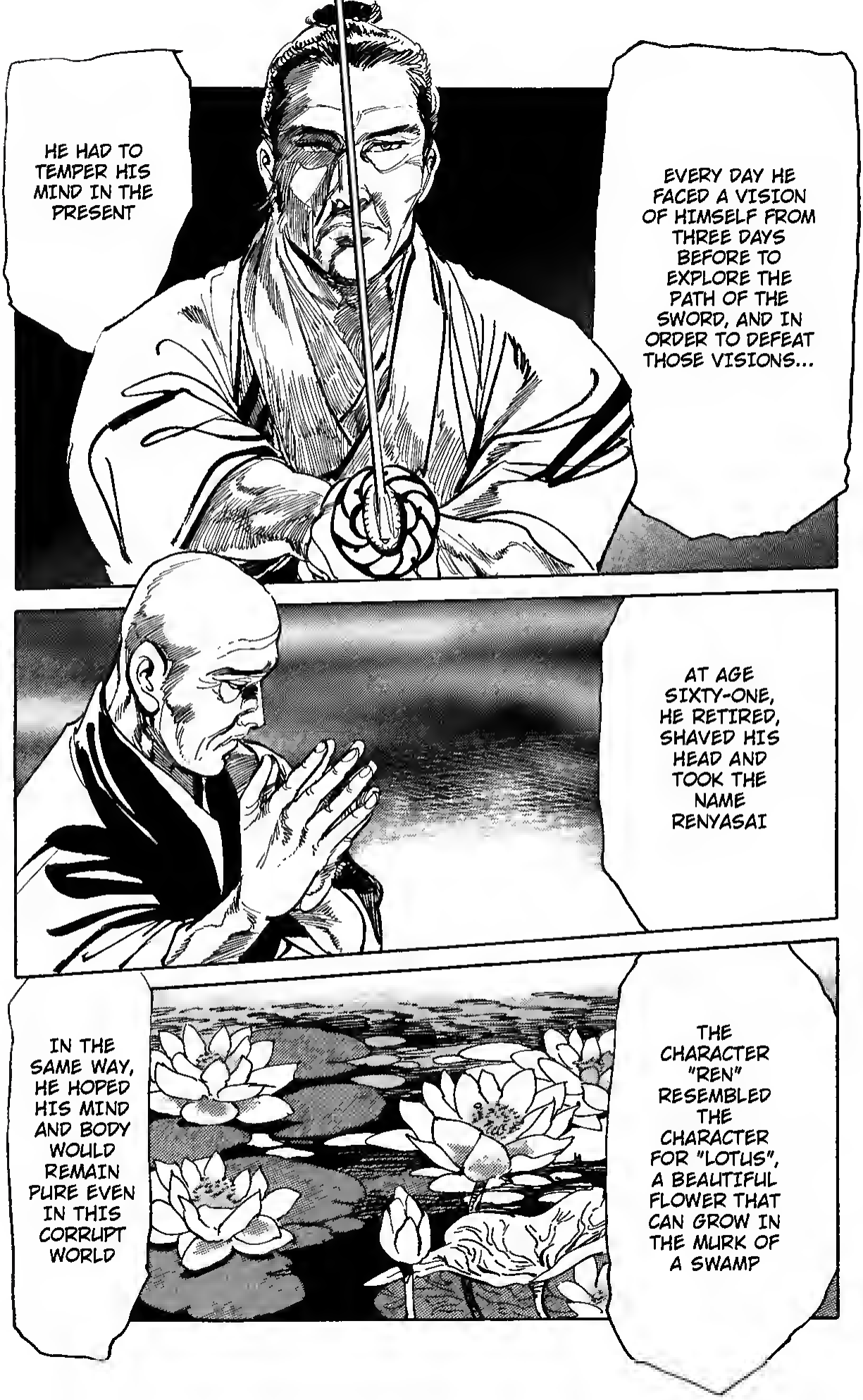
AH!

I
IMAGINE
SO
YOU
JUST
FADED
AWAY!

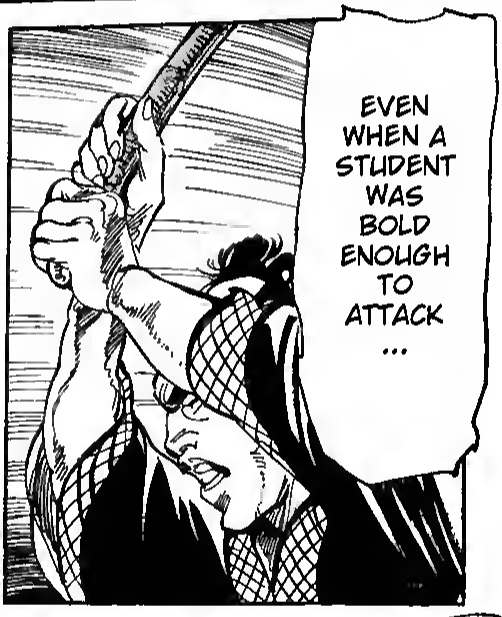
IT'S HARD
TO BELIEVE,
BUT A
MOMENT
AGO, YOU
JUST
VANISHED
BEFORE MY
EYES,
FATHER!!

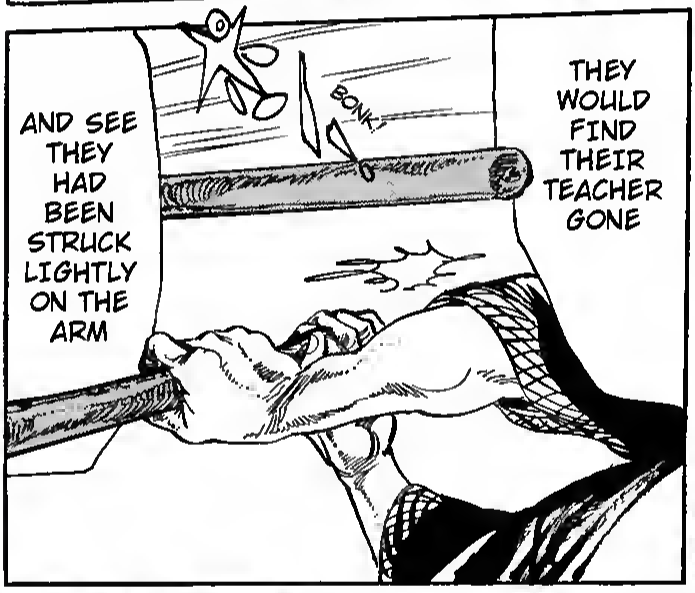

IT WAS SOMETHING RENYA'S TOP STUDENTS OFTEN SPOKE OF
BUT HIS OBJECTIVE WAS STILL IN FRONT OF HIM
AT LAST, I HAVE FINALLY CAUGHT UP TO YOU, MASTER JUBEI

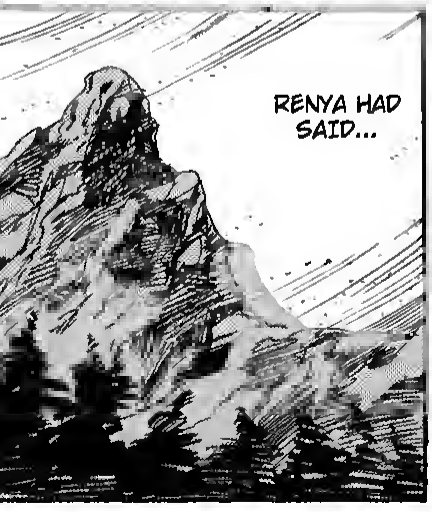
IT WAS A DEAD-LY FOE
ONE DAY, HE WAS CHALLENGED BY GHOST OF HIMSELF FROM THREE DAYS BEFORE
BUT RENYA WOULD NOT BE BEATEN
JUST WHEN HE FELT THAT HE HAD MASTERED HIMSELF, HE WAS AGAIN CONFRONTED BY A SELF FROM THREE DAYS BEFORE


HE HAD TO TEMPER HIS MIND IN THE PRESENT
EVERY DAY HE FACED A VISION OF HIMSELF FROM THREE DAYS BEFORE TO EXPLORE THE PATH OF THE SWORD, AND IN ORDER TO DEFEAT THOSE VISIONS...
AT AGE SIXTY-ONE, HE RETIRED, SHAVED HIS HEAD AND TOOK THE NAME RENYASAI
IN THE SAME WAY, HE HOPED HIS MIND AND BODY WOULD REMAIN PURE EVEN IN THIS CORRUPT WORLD
THE CHARACTER "REN" RESEMBLED THE CHARACTER FOR "LOTUS", A BEAUTIFUL FLOWER THAT CAN GROW IN THE MURK OF A SWAMP

WHEN RENYA SPARRED WITH STUDENTS WHO HAD LEARNED ALL THE STYLE'S TECHNIQUES, NONE OF THEM COULD EVEN SWING AT HIM
IT WAS BECAUSE HE COULD READ ...
MANY MOVES AHEAD AND SEE THE DEPTHS OF THE DEPTHS OF THEIR MINDS


EVEN WHEN A STUDENT WAS BOLD ENOUGH TO ATTACK ...

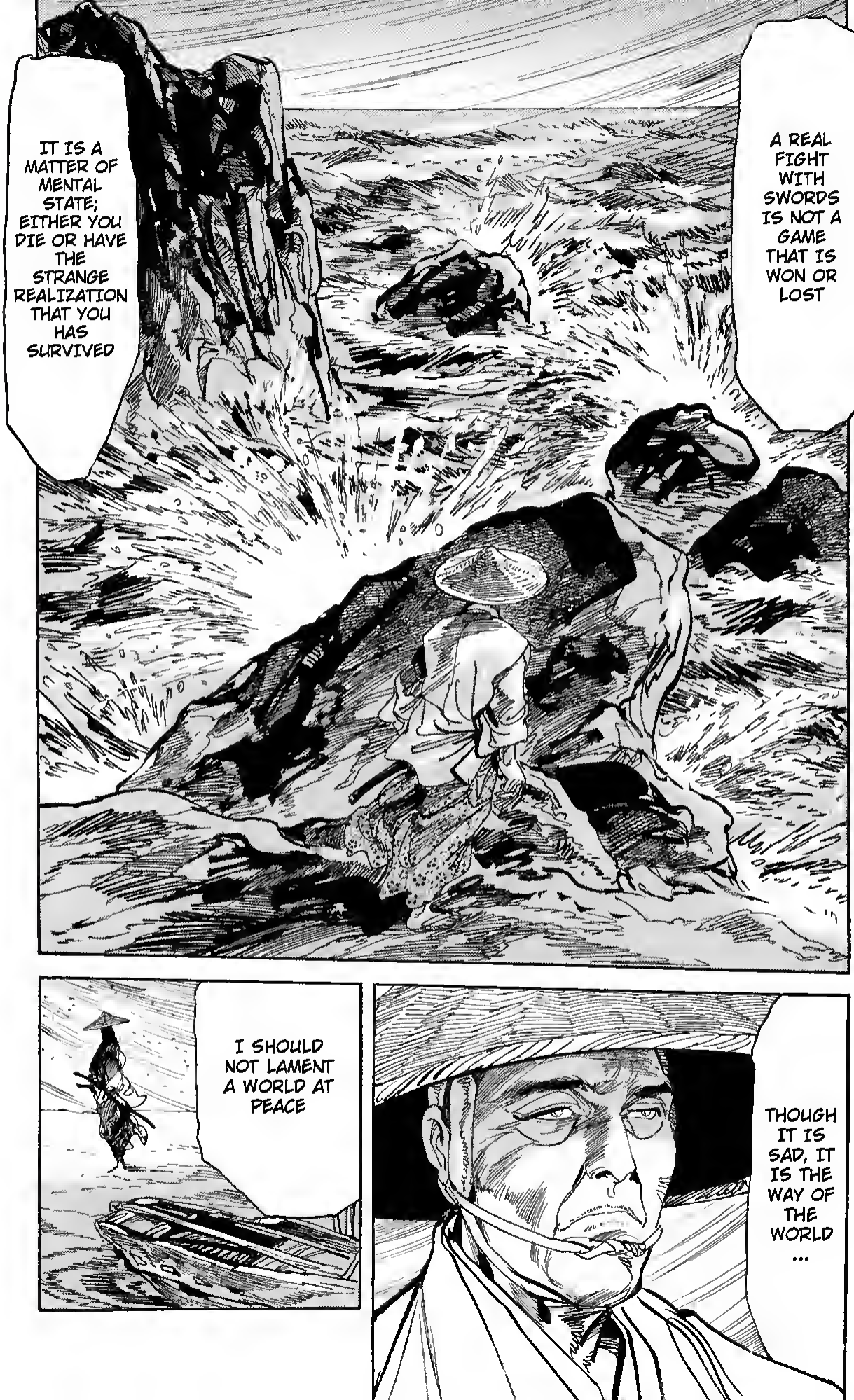

THEY WOULD FIND THEIR TEACHER GONE
BONK
AND SEE THEY HAD BEEN STRUCK LIGHTLY ON THE ARM


RENYA HAD SAID...

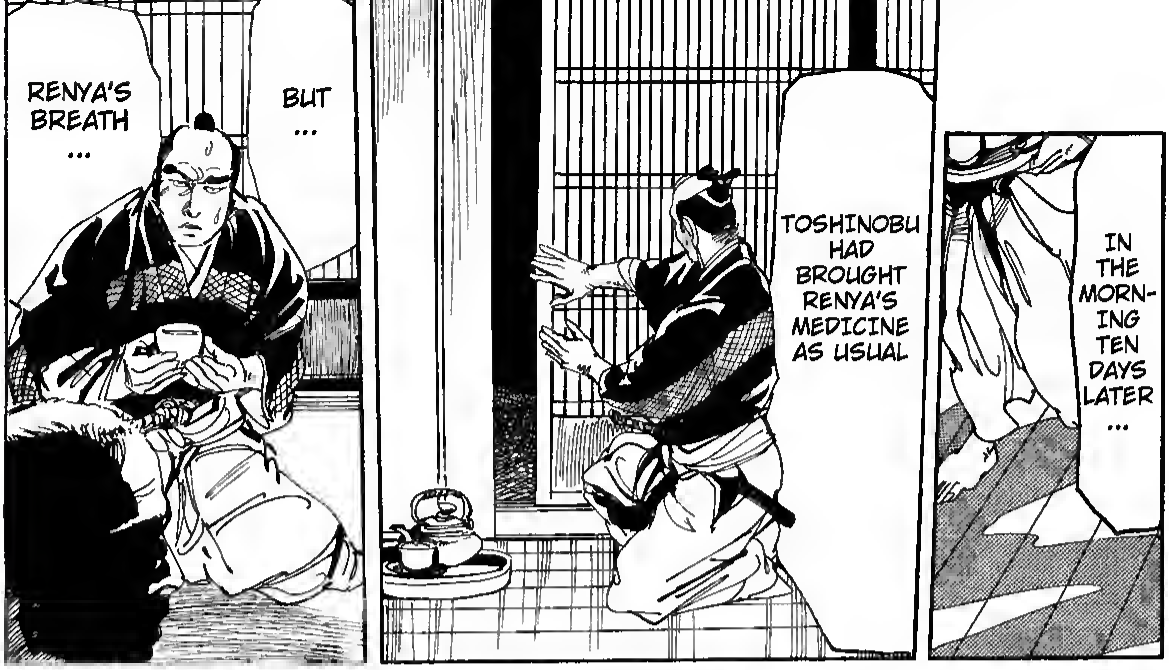
BUT THREE DAYS LATER ...
IT WOULD BE SORE TO THE MARROW

AT FIRST THE PLACE STRUCK WOULD NOT EVEN STING

"I HAVE NO NEED FOR A FUNERAL OR GRAVE
SIMPLY PASS DOWN THE SPIRIT OF THE SHIN-KAGE STYLE"
HOWEVER ...
IF YOU HAVE ME, YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!
THE STUDY OF THE MARTIAL ARTS TURNED TO FORMALISM
AS THE AGE CHANGED, MERCHANTS CAME TO THE FOREFRONT OF CULTURE, AND MONEY BEGAN TO DRIVE SOCIETY
THIS IS NOT THE TRUE WAY OF THE SWORD!
RENYA ADMONISHED THEM
THAT'S THE SPOT!
WHACK!
AND IN DOJOS, SPARRING HAD TURNED INTO A COMPE-TITIVE HOBBY PLAYED WITH BAMBOO SWORDS
NICE HIT!
BONK!
ANOTHER ROUND?
BUT THE TREND SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY


A REAL FIGHT WITH SWORDS IS NOT A GAME THAT IS WON OR LOST
IT IS A MATTER OF MENTAL STATE; EITHER YOU DIE OR HAVE THE STRANGE REALIZATION THAT YOU HAS SURVIVED
I SHOULD NOT LAMENT A WORLD AT PEACE
THOUGH IT IS SAD, IT IS THE WAY OF THE WORLD ...

RENYA, TOO, HAD GROWN SICK AND WEAK
IT IS THE FATE OF HUMANS TO BE BORN, AGE, WEAKEN AND DIE
AND ASKED TOSHINOBU FOR HIS LONG AND SHORT SWORDS, HIS SAMURAI SPIRIT
SAT IN THE ZEN WAY ...
HE WOKE UP ...
THE MOMENT HE KNEW HE WOULD DIE...
THOUGH HIS BODY WAS HEAVY AND FRAIL, HIS SPIRIT HAD NOT DULLED
AND EVEN THEN, HE CONTINUED TO TEMPER HIS MIND



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